STOURBRIDGE
CHRONICLE

Thursday, February 21, 2013 | Read by more than 57,000 people | Price when sold 50p | mna media

Pavilion work

Cricket club declares revamp is almost over

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Memory Lane

Vintage bikes that set enthusiasts' blood racing

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Hat-trick hero

Hot-shot Finley's strikes enough to seal victory

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Fear over future of centres for young

A GRANT used for funding children's centres in Dudley borough has been cut by the Government, sparking fears over their future.

There are 20 centres offering support and activities for youngsters and their parents.

Dudley Council received £13.2 million in 2012/13, of which £6m was used to fund the services but the Early Intervention Grant will be cut by £2.8m in 2013/14, which may mean cuts to children's centre budgets.

Council education boss Councillor Tim Crumpton said changes would need to be made to help centres save money and could not rule out redundancies or closures

A consultation is due to take place.

One way the council is looking to save money is by reducing management costs. Fifteen centres are run by schools and the others by an outside organisation.

Councillor Crumpton said the authority was looking at changing the management system which could see one manager being in charge of more than one centre.

He added: "I can't say we won't lose somebody in the centres or any of the centres."

Councillor Patrick Harley, Tory opposition group leader, said he was against any changes.

Cyclist hurt in collision

A CYCLIST was in a serious condition in hospital after being involved in a crash with a car near Stourbridge.

The cyclist, a 74-year-old man from the Stourbridge area, was hit by a silver Peugeot 406 on Norton Road, Iverley, between Stourbridge and Kidderminster at 10.20am on Saturday. He was taken to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham with back, neck and head injuries.

The car driver, a 74-year-old man from Stourbridge, was not injured. The road was closed for around three hours for investigations.

Sleepwalk wife died when she fell down stairs

A HOUSEWIFE known to suffer from bouts of sleepwalking was found dead by her husband at the bottom of stairs at their Stourbridge home, an inquest heard.

The family of Jane Robinson believe she fell down the stairs in the middle of the night. Despite efforts by her husband, Neil, to rouse her, Mrs Robinson, aged 51, died in the fall on March 9 last year. She suffered fractures to her head.

Black Country deputy coroner Dr Andrew Thompson ruled at the inquest on Friday Mrs Robinson died as a result of an accident.

Mr Robinson, who works as a metal polisher, giving evidence at the hearing, said the couple who lived at Churchward Close, Amblecote, enjoyed a normal night after he had got back from work and had some drinks.

He said he thought she seemed a little "stressed out" adding: "She was tossing and turning for a bit" after they had gone to bed.

Mr Robinson, aged 49, said: "She was not in bed when I got up but I do snore sometimes so I thought nothing of it.

"When I got up and put the landing light on I saw her. I was unable to raise her, she was stone cold." He added: "She was known to have sleepwalked" before describing occasions when she had suffered injuries in the past.

Dr Thompson asked if it had been usual for Mrs Robinson to get up during the night and walk out of the room they shared. Mr Robinson replied: "That would have been quite normal."

Pathologist Dr Swapna Ghosh, from Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital, said that there had been 220mg of alcohol in Mrs Robinson's blood. The drink drive limit is 80. She gave medical cause of death as head injuries due to a fall with alcoholic toxification as a contributing factor.

She added Mrs Robinson suffered multiple skull fractures and a 10cm cut on her head.

In giving his verdict Dr Thompson said there was no evidence that the alcohol in her system had contributed to her death.

Mr Robinson said he was still too upset by the accident to speak following the inquest at Dudley Coroners Court.

HOTEL GO-AHEAD BOOST FOR TOWN

PLANS for a £6 million hotel in Stourbridge which will create more than 60 jobs have been welcomed by councillors.

The 80-bedroom Premier Inn to be built on land just off Birmingham Street, was recommended for approval by planners and unanimously approved by councillors.

by Sharon Morris

Speaking after a meeting of the planning development committee, Les Jones, councillor for Pedmore and Stourbridge East, said: "I think it's absolutely great news and just what we need. I'd been trying to get them here for a long time.

"I think adding that facility into the town is going to give it an economic boost and also clean up what is a bit of a mish-mash in the town.

"It shows that Stourbridge is still a vibrant town."

Cabinet member for regeneration Shaukat Ali said after Monday's meeting: "I think it's great news and a sign of confidence in the borough.

"In terms of regeneration, Stourbridge needs more hotel accommodation and such a development, especially along with the Tesco store being built, will bring a lot of local jobs for local people."

Councillor Colin Wilson told the meeting: "There is a dearth of hotels in the borough so this application is very welcome and to throw a restaurant in as well is a very good thing.

Planners at Dudley Council had welcomed the proposals.

A report to the committee said it was a regeneration opportunity to help sustain the town centre as a whole and help secure economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity.

It addeded: "The scheme would result in a significant number of new jobs and economic benefits to Stourbridge, the Black Country and the West Midlands as a whole at a time of high unemployment."

The 80-bed hotel is expected to create 43 full-time and 22 part-time jobs, as well as those jobs involved in its construction.

Its developers, Whitbread Property and Barberry Developments, also hope it will increase tourism.

The hotel will have its own access road off Birmingham Street and will have a Brewers Fayre restaurant and 122 car parking spaces.

It is hoped the hotel building could be open as early as spring next year.

Out of 73 letters sent to residents living near the former Cox Hire site, only one objection was received – from someone who said the plans were not suited to the historic landscape of Stourbridge.

But Stourbridge Township Council chairman Margaret Scott called it "a great idea" that would provide jobs and bring tourists.

Pupils go crazy as they open course

Pupils Lily-May Wooldridge and Heike Palmer, both seven, at the opening of the crazy golf course

PUPILS from a Stourbridge school joined a crazy golf champion to launch Merry Hill shopping centre's indoor urban golf course.

The nine-hole adventure course at the Black Country complex was opened by youngsters from St James's Primary, Wollaston, and Chris Harding just in time for the school half-term holiday.

Launching at the same time is Quest's rope course designed for children under the age of seven.

There is already an aerial ropes course for adults at one corner of the centre, which at 55ft is the highest anywhere in Europe.

Mark Knox, manager at Quest Merry Hill, said: "The Quest adventure golf course and Sky Tykes ropes are perfect for parents looking to do something a little different with the kids this February half term. We're looking forward to seeing how many daredevils we have trying out our course over the school holiday."

Quest operators Paragon Entertainment has also built a Nerf blaster indoor zone outside the centre, on the site of the now removed ice rink.

In December, it was reported than more than 15,000 people had visited Quest in its first month. Quest was officially opened to shoppers at the centre's Christmas lights turn on in November.

So far, 30 jobs have been created at the site, which will cost £1.2million once completed.

Solicitors cashier's 10 years stealing

Pauline Sutcliffe – guilty

A CASHIER has admitted stealing an estimated £166,000 from the Black Country solicitors' firm where she worked.

Pauline Sutcliffe took the cash over a 10-year period but the firm has since gone into liquidation and there is "uncertainty" about the exact amount involved, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told on Monday.

The 58-year-old pleaded guilty to stealing £165,784 over 10 years up to December 31, 2010 from Stables and Co, which used to have offices in Rowley Regis, Stourbridge and Halesowen.

The business is now in the hands of the Solicitors Regulatory Authority.

The amount on the charge was based on her confessions but had not been independently verified because of the liquidation, the court heard.

True

The way she cooked the books to try to cover up the theft of cash paid into Stables by clients meant there was a danger of "double or even treble accounting," Mr Robert Cowley, defending, said.

"The money stolen was only ever cash handed over by clients and the only way that a true figure for the loss can be established is through the proper accounts of the firm that are now in the hands of the Solicitors Regulatory Authority. We do not accept that £165,000 is the amount involved. It could be considerably less."

It was agreed this could be amended if necessary.

Sutcliffe from Wolverhampton Street, Oldbury, who was of previous good character, was remanded on unconditional bail until her next court appearance.

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Views sought on post office move plan

THE Post Office has unveiled plans to move its branch at the Merry Hill shopping centre to a larger spot indoors.

Shoppers can have a say on the proposals to move the Post Office, from opposite the bus station to the upper level of the centre, next to the management centre.

The move is part of a modernisation programme by the Post Office and it would mean the branch's opening hours being extended by 11 hours a week, from Monday to Saturday.

Post Office regional network manager for Central England, Adrian Wales, said: "Weare confident that this new modern branch will meet the needs of the local community and secure services for the future.

"The proposed changes to the branch are part of a three-year investment programme, the largest in the history of the Post Office.

"The investment marks a commitment to no more branch closure programmes."

The new Merry Hill branch would have six serving positions, a mixture of open-plan and traditional screened positions. Opening hours would be 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 8.30am-5.30pm on Saturdays.

The Post Office is urging local people to give their feedback about the Merry Hill proposal before March 14. Send views by Freepost to Your Comments to Post Office Ltd, or send an email to comments@postoffice.co.uk or call 08457 223344.

Jail for burglar trapped by blood stain in house

A BURGLAR who stole a family's treasured photographs and left them frightened to go out has been jailed for three years.

The mother of the household targeted in the raid said the family had lost irreplaceable wedding photos and hundreds of pictures of her three children.

Following the burglary, her children, aged five, four and two, would not go upstairs on their own and she was frightened to leave the house in case it was burgled again, a court heard.

Lee Heaven, aged 39, of Hobgate Road, Heath Town, Wolverhampton, admitted burglary in Woodsetton, and stealing items including a television, laptop computer, games console, watch, camcorder and pillow case, worth a total of about £2,500.

Smashed

He told police a friend had asked him to transport a television he had bought and realised it was a burglary only when he arrived.

But Mr Paul Reid, prosecuting, told Wolverhampton Crown Court last week that Heaven's blood was found on the frame of the kitchen window at the property, which had been smashed in the burglary on December 14.

Heaven then admitted he had been inside the property.

The family, who had gone out at 2.30pm, discovered the burglary when they returned home at 6.40pm and could not get in because the door was bolted from the inside.

Heaven had been released on licence from prison for another burglary when the offence happened, the court heard.

Mr David Bratt, defending, said Heaven, a father of four, acknowledged that any intrusion into a person's property would cause distress.

Cannabis factory arrests

A MAN and a woman were arrested after officers discovered a cannabis factory at a Stourbridge house. Around 24 plants were seized from the property in Chapel Street, Lye. The two were arrested on suspicion of production of drugs.

New buses are just the ticket

Councillor Cath Hartley, vice chairman of Centro, and National Express general manager Steve Hale, celebrate investment in new buses, which are part of the service for Russells Hall Hospital

EIGHT new buses connecting a hospital with Brierley Hill and Dudley have been launched as part of a £1.5 million investment.

National Express West Midlands has unveiled the new buses that will operate on the 222 route between the two towns and Russells Hall Hospital.

The slimline buses will be able to manoeuvre around housing estates more easily. They will feature new technology including announcements to alert passengers with visual and hearing impairments where the bus will be stopping next.

The 222 will also have distinctive green route branding, making it easier for customers to find and use it when making regular journeys to hospita.

The new vehicles mark the start of a larger £10 million investment programme between National Express West Midlands and transport authority Centro. As well as the new buses, Centro is installing new shelters and more real-time information displays along the route.

The work is being funded from a £10million scheme to improve bus services across the region with £1.5m being put in by Westfield, Merry Hill shopping centre's owners.

Man stole wanting to get jail sentence

A MAN stole perfume wanting to be jailed, a court heard.

After spending the weekend in custody awaiting his case at Dudley Magistrates Court, however, he decided prison was not all he had thought it would be.

But magistrates locked him up again for 12 weeks. Christopher Dixon, aged 47, of Wells Road, Brierley Hill, appeared in court to plead guilty to two charges of theft.

In January he stole £308 worth of Prada perfume and in February he stole £75.60 worth of perfume, both from Debenhams at Merry Hill. His solicitor William Harrison said: "He had been having problems with his benefits.

"He also had problems with his flatmate.

"Having served some time in prison over the weekend, he's decided it's not all it's cracked up to be and all his problems are still there."

Dixon told police he stole the perfume to sell for food.

He had been on a sentence of eight weeks suspended for one year for stealing vodka when he committed the Debenhams thefts.

He was sentenced to six weeks for breaching that and a further six weeks for the two latest offences.

Lamp post collison car overturns

FIRE crews were called after a car hit a lamp post and overturned on a quiet street in Dudley.

It happened at around 8am on Sunday at The Straits in Lower Gornal at the corner of St Andrews Close.

It is believed the driver of the VW Golf left the scene. Police are investigating.

Resident Vaughan Evans, aged 52, said: "My son was in the garden and heard it and saw the lamp post topple over and the driver ran off.

"There was a loud bang, the car was completely on its side, the windscreen was smashed and windows were smashed.

"The police, fire service and ambulance service came but the lad had gone.

"It is a miracle that no-one was hurt, the lamp post could have hit a car."

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Shake-up to delay some post deliveries

SOME residents will receive their post later in Stourbridge because of a shake-up to delivery services.

Royal Mail is changing its delivery routes in the town and bosses say residents could receive their letters later because of the changes.

But some post could arrive earlier. The changes affect the DY7, DY8 and DY9 postcode areas.

Royal Mail said changes were necessary as people were sending fewer letters and more parcels and packages, which were more difficult and heavy to deliver.

They are introducing more vans to take bulkier items to homes in the area. The new delivery routes, which will see workers continue to deliver in the morning and for longer during the day, will be introduce in phases.

Residents and businesses will receive a letter outlining the changes.

Royal Mail's collection and delivery sector manager Andrew Corr said: "We are proud of the high regard in which our postmen and women are held in Stourbridge.

"The changes to delivery routes will mean that a member of our local and experienced team will still be delivering to our customers in Stourbridge.

The local delivery team and I are fully committed to providing a high quality of service that is as reliable and friendly as customers have come to expect from Royal Mail in Stourbridge."

Children in story time

CHILDREN put on their pyjamas and enjoyed a special bedtime story session with Halesowen father turned author Lee Howell at a library.

The youngsters arrived at Cradley Library, in Colley Lane, dressed in their pyjamas and enjoyed a drink and a biscuit as they listened to him reading his own work "Millie's Magic Bed".

He wrote the book as a Christmas gift for his daughters. Bedtime stories run on the last Thursday of each month at Cradley Library. The next session will be on February 28.

Club set to declare pavilion work nearly over

Club chairman Harilal Patel with MP Margot James

FINISHING touches are being made to the refurbishment of an 88-year-old cricket pavilion, heralding a new dawn for Stourbridge Cricket Club

It secured more than £42,000 worth of grants to fund the restoration.

The transformation has been going on at the War Memorial Athletic Ground in recent months to coincide with success on the field for the club, which plays in the Birmingham and District Premier Cricket League. Wooden flooring inside has been replaced.

Work has also been carried out on new drainage systems, the umpires' changing room, ceilings and toilets. Stourbridge MP Margot James helped the club with the final funding push for the urgent refurbishment of its changing rooms and shower area.

She visited the club to meet chairman Harilal Patel, who thanked her for her efforts as works enter their final stage.

Important

"It was very important that we obtained the funding in order to keep the traditional pavilion up to standard, which will be of great benefit to local young people in the future," Mr Patel said.

"This marks a new phase in Stourbridge Cricket Club's history, and we are delighted to have Margot's ongoing support."

Stourbridge secured grants from Sport England's Places People Play Inspired Facilities Fund, the Cory Environmental Trust in Britain and Dudley Council's Stourbridge Area Committee and contributions from ADS Supply Ltd and HS Richards Ltd.

Miss James said: "The club brings great joy to both players and spectators, and as such is a critical part of the Stourbridge community. Good facilities are also essential in order to attract more young people into the sport with all the benefits this brings."

Inside pictures are latest weapon in theatre battle

FROM the fly tower used to hoist scenery into place to the art deco coving and dressing rooms once graced by stars of the stage – a display of pictures of Dudley Hippodrome are the latest campaign weapon supporters hope will save the venue from demolition.

Campaigners fighting to save Dudley Hippodrome photographed the historical features in the threatened building to get people to back their fight to stop the theatre being levelled.

Council officers have already submitted plans to knock down the council-owned former theatre to make way for the major Castle Hill development. But The Friends of Dudley Hippodrome say the 1930s building should be saved and restored to welcome the biggest stars of the stage.

The building has been empty since 2009 when Gala Bingo shut.

Around 30 people attended a meeting at The Station Hotel when the images, taken by campaigner Dr Paul Collins, were put on show.

They show the intact fly tower which has more than 20 hoists to change the scenery and move equipment during a production.

Acoustics

The collection also shows the architectural features of the ceilings and walls to enhance acoustics, the art deco fixtures and fittings and even two dressing rooms with doors that still bear the names Moscow and Madrid – a tradition in theatres.

Dr Collins said: "This is a solid steel structured building, it is very much fit for purpose. And, although some of the bingo areas have been vandalised, a lot of that is only cosmetic."

Chairman of the group Geoff Fitzpatrick said: "The thing is many people just think of the hippodrome as a bingo hall. They don't realise there are all these wonderful features hidden inside. People have forgotten.

"With these images I hope we can show people what it is like, and remind them of the fantastic features which are hidden away."

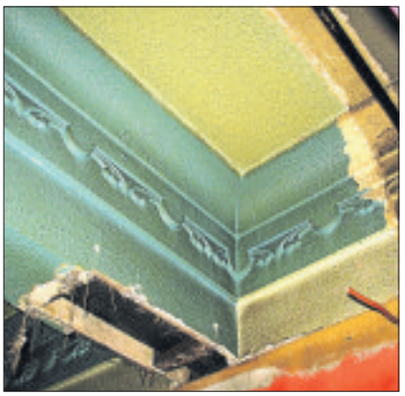
Campaigner Joanna Roden said the group was hoping to preserve the future of the building.

She said: "It's not about the past anymore, this is all about the future, about how the hippodrome could work, and benefit Dudley.

"We have the Black Country Living Museum and the zoo that people visit during the day, if we reopened the theatre it would boost our evening economy. We could start offering tourist packages to Dudley."

Theatre friends Paul Collins, Martin Whitehead and Joanna Roden

Geoff Fitzpatrick, chairman of the friends' group speaking on the campaign to save the theatre



One of the cornices inside Dudley Hippodrome

NEWS in brief

Inscription plan for war memorial

A FIRST World War memorial in Kidderminster will be inscribed to commemorate soldiers who have died in other conflicts.

The Angel of Peace statue by St Mary and All Saints Church pays tribute the dead of the 1914-1918 war. Kidderminster Charter Trustees want to add an inscription to the base of the statue stating: "In proud and undying memory of all men and women connected with Kidderminster who gave their lives in the 1939-45 war and all other conflicts".

£10,000 of bikes stolen from shed

THREE bikes, worth a total of £10,000, have been stolen from a garden shed in Kidderminster.

Police described them as "distinctive" and appealed for help from witnesses.

Two of the bikes are for off-road use – a white Santa Cruz Juliana worth £2,000 and a black Santa Cruz V10 worth £6,000.

The other is a yellow Carrera road bike worth £2,000. The bikes were taken from a shed off Alder Avenue between 7pm on Friday, February 8 and 8.40am the next day.

Major roadworks have reached end

A 21-month-long roadworks scheme in Dudley town centre, which left many traders out of pocket, has finally been completed. Utility companies have been upgrading services and carrying out repairs in 53 streets since April 2011.

Dudley Council said the final phase of the work, which was in Wolverhampton Street was finished last week .

Premature babies support meeting

A GROUP to help the families of premature babies is organising a "chintzy vintage-style" cafe and cake sale on March 8.

Run by Dudley Bliss Family Group, it will be from 10am to 2pm at the Secret Coffee Club in Insight House, Pearson Street, off High Street, Brierley Hill.

Appeal on peal

A CHURCH near Stourbridge needs more bell ringers. St John the Baptist, next to Hagley Hall, is appealing for people who already know how to ring bells – and those who would like to learn. Call 01562 886363.

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NEWS

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

YOU are what you eat. I had a beef pie on Tuesday and I've been a little hoarse ever since.

YES, I know there's a lot of it about. Throat full of razor blades, head full of snot and your voice suddenly dropping an octave. For men, there is one advantage of this chesty winter malady. At last we can all do a good impression of Lee Marvin's basso-profundo hit from Paint Your Wagon. All together now: I was born under a wandrin' star.

THE wrong sort of snow brought down an oak tree which in turn brought down all the phone lines in our neighbourhood. As I reported earlier, BT said on Monday it would be fixed in 48 hours. Fat chance. The engineer tells me it could have been sorted earlier but he had to wait for the man who decides whether telegraph poles are safe to climb. No surprises there, then.

TRYING to get our calls diverted was enough to make you tear your hair out. It involved the inevitable conversation with a call centre in India. When these call centres first opened I used to chat for ages with operators in Benares or Bangalore about where they were and where I was and how's the weather your end and who'd you fancy for the First Test? But over the years the fluent English speakers seem to have moved on. Call me paranoid but I suspect when I call up these days, the supervisor cups his hand over the phone and says to his team: "Rhodes on the line again. Anyone here not speak English?"

SO FAREWELL, Pope Benedict. Purely by chance we were in Italy when he became Pope in 2005. As we flipped between CNN and BBC in our hotel room, there was some confusion about events in the Vatican. Had the right colour of smoke emerged from the chimney? Had the cardinals made their decision or were they still haggling? Yet while CNN and the BBC dithered, all the church bells in Riva del Garda began ringing. Somehow, the people knew they had a new Pope and the sound of those bells echoing joyously over Lake Garda is a memory to treasure.

IN A week when we are thinking hard about the stuff we eat, my local off-licence is offering expert advice on choosing the right wines to go with your dinner menu. I am torn between Marelot and Chardonneigh.

ONE of the most depressing reports this week is the news that Britain does not have enough skilled IT technicians to make the internet secure. Because our universities are turning out the wrong sort of graduates, using the worldwide web will become increasingly risky. But while we are short of cyber experts, we are knee deep in video-technique, leisure-planning and media-studies graduates who have no jobs, no hope and £40,000 of university debt.

At the heart of this imbalance of talent is the old snobbery among English academics for anything that involves using your hands or, heaven forbid, wearing a boiler suit. Wickedly misled by useless careers advisers, bright kids who could make a great living working with widgets waste three years of their lives faffing around with video cameras in the belief that they will be the next Matt Baker. Meanwhile, plumbers (if you can get one) charge £60 per hour.

AND off to the nurse for the annual blood-pressure test and analysis of my latest blood sample. Everything seems boringly normal but I suspect 20 years from now we will look back on this ritual examination of our gore in much the way that today's doctors look back on leeches, bleeding cups, black bile and miasma. Medicine never stands still. Today's wisdom is tomorrow's folklore.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Month's overtime for ambulance staff

AMBULANCE staff in the West Midlands are clocking up nearly four weeks of overtime a year as demand on the emergency service grows.

The West Midlands service's 4,000 workers recorded a total of 554,705 hours in overtime last year – about 139 hours a year each.

The staff get paid one-and-a-half times their hourly rate for the overtime, equating to around £3 million a year. More than 90 per cent of the extra hours was shared between clinical workers including paramedics, and call centre operators.

The figures, obtained by a Freedom of Information Act request, showed that December and January was the busiest time for overtime.

Chief executive Anthony Marsh said the service faced an increase in call-outs compared with previous years. Over the festive period, the service was forced to cancel some training and non-essential meetings.

Help was also sought from St John Ambulance, employed on a commercial contract, to assist paramedics. A spokesman said: "Overtime is a necessary part of working for an emergency service due to the unpredictable nature of the work. Around 21 per cent of the overtime was in the two busiest months of the year, December and January. The trust uses overtime to continue to provide a safe and efficient service."

A spokesman for Unison said: "The amount of overtime expected gets a mixed reception. Some are fed up, some people just see it as part of their job."

Rent rise plan sparks call for consultation

PLANS to increase council house rents by an average of 4.6 per cent have sparked calls for wider consultation in the future.

Dudley Council's cabinet has backed proposals for a £186.68 a year rise, which will come into force from April.

It followed last year's average increase of 7.7 per cent or £288.08 a year.

In 2011, the rent went up by an average of 6.7 per cent or £235.04 compared with two per cent or £68.12 in the previous year.

by Heather Large

Chairman of Dudley Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations Martin Smith said that while members had accepted this year's rent hike, he wanted there to be a wider consultation next time.

"The council always comes to the Federation and consults with us.

"We understand the reason for increasing the rent and that the council is only following Government regulations but we would like there to be a wider consultation in future years.

Meeting

"We have accepted this year's increase but it's going to have a massive impact because of the welfare reforms," he added.

Mr Smith said while the Federation was consulted as part of the process, he would like the individual tenants to be involved.

"We are having a meeting in July with the council about this," he added.

The rent rise will be considered by the full council on March 4.

It has been calculated using the Government's formula, which is based on inflation and the size and value of council properties.

Deputy council leader Councillor Shaukat Ali said some of the money from this year's rise would contribute to the maintenance of council homes and the formation of a team to tackle anti-social behaviour.

The team is being set up in a bid to tackle complaints about troublemakers across the borough and will aim to reduce the number of problems reported.

Councillor Ali said that work to replace old electric storage heaters in properties was also planned.

Service charges for lighting and heating in 344 sheltered housing properties will also rise by 2.6 per cent.

Other charges to be increased include the cost of laundry tokens for tenants in five high rise blocks in the borough – two in Brierley Hill and three in Dudley.

The price will go up from £2 to £2.10 per token.

Meanwhile, it's proposed that pitch licences at Oak Lane in Kingswinford be increased by 2.6 per cent.

Bathroom wrecked by blaze

A FIRE broke out in the bathroom of a house in Lye. Fire crews from Brierley Hill were called to the terraced property in Coventry Road at 3.45pm on Sunday. The fire completely damaged the bathroom. Crews were also called after a fire broke out in a house in Shenstone, near Kidderminster. It happened at 3pm on Sunday after a fuse box caught fire in the corridor of the detached property in Worcester Road.

Friends ready to pamper pets

Debbie Moore, front left, Teresa Neath and staff member Maria Crompton with the Mayoress and Mayor of Dudley, Michelle and Councillor Melvyn Mottram

PAMPERED pets are in for a treat thanks to a business which has just opened.

Friends Teresa Neath and Debbie Moore have started the new venture, Companions Pets, in Dudley Road, Brierley Hill.

It offers services including a doggy day care service to help busy owners. People can leave their dogs during the day.

Staff will feed and exercise the pets until the owner returns. There is also a fully stocked shop with food and equipment for a range of animals including cats, reptiles and birds.

The pair will also offer a grooming service and behavioural classes.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Dudley, Councillor Melvyn Mottram and wife Michelle, officially opened the business.

Bike rider killed in crash over drink limit

AN EXPERIENCED motorcyclist was over the legal drink drive limit when he died after crashing into a wall, an inquest has heard.

Richard Garfield, aged 47, was riding a Honda CBR 600 bike when he lost control on a left-hand bend on the A458 just outside Stourbridge.

He skidded across the junction with Wollaston Road, hit a boundary wall and suffered serious injuries to his chest and head.

At an inquest at Cannock Coroner's Court, South Staffordshire coroner Andrew Haigh was told Mr Garfield's alcohol level was 115mg in 100ml of blood, the limit is 80mg, when he crashed on August 12.

Collision investigation police officer Mark Mould that Mr Garfield was on the wrong side of the road. He said: "I think also his ability was affected by the consumption of alcohol."

Mr Haigh, who ruled Mr Garfield's death accidental, said he would write to the Highways Agency to ask the location of chevrons on the bend be looked at.

Mr Garfield had lived in Landsdown Green, Kidderminster.

He was an experienced motorcyclist who had held a driving licence for nearly 30 years.

Depot plan put on hold

PLANS by Severn Valley Railway for a new diesel depot at Kidderminster Station have been out on hold by Wyre Forest District Council's planning committee.

A report to the committee last week said there had been one letter of objection from a local resident concerned about possible fumes and noise.

The railway wants to construct the new depot for maintenance and storage of diesel locomotives. Councillors agreed to defer consideration of the application at their recent meeting.

Pothole problem

SEVERAL cars were damaged after hitting a deep pothole on the M6 in the Black Country. Emergency highways workers were called to repair the hole on the slip road from the M6 south onto the M5 at junction eight near Great Barr.

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Home is found failing to improve

A CARE home failed to meet four essential standards for its residents, despite healthcare inspectors ordering improvements to be made.

Coach House Nursing Home in Broome, near Stourbridge, was told to improve in five key areas following an inspection by the Care Quality Commission in June last year.

But an unannounced visit by the body in December found the home was only meeting one of the essential standards, and failing the other four.

A CQC report reveals that inspectors found that the home had failed to ensure people received safe and appropriate care that met their needs and rights, and that people were not given medicines they needed when they needed them.

Other problem areas related to staff not being properly trained and supervised and a lack of quality checking systems.

A spokesman for the home, who did not want to be named, said improvements had been made since the latest inspection.

Worcestershire County Council's director of adult and community services, Eddie Clarke, said: "The county council is working closely with this provider to bring about the necessary improvements."

Stores ban for woman shoplifter

A WOMAN with a heroin habit has been banned from three supermarkets after she stole food and alcohol. Kerry Malpass, of Valley Road, Lye, admitted three charges of shoplifting at Dudley Magistrates' Court.

The 31-year-old stole two joints of beef and two steaks valued at £60 from Stourbridge's Waitrose store on January 14 and tried to steal whisky and an electric toothbrush worth £75 from the same branch 10 days later.

On February 2 she stole £75.92 of alcohol from Aldi in Netherton. Magistrates asked for a probation report.

Malpass was bailed on condition that she stays away from Waitrose in Stourbridge or Aldi at Netherton and Stourbridge until her next court appearance on March 6.

John with Neilum Raqia on the set of Misfits

The couple on the set of top police drama The Bill

On the set of the popular hospital -set soap Casualty in 2012

On the set of the long-running Midsomer Murders

John Walker with Brian Murphy in The Cafe

It's every little bit part that helps a Tesco extra

YOU may not know it, but you have probably seen supermarket worker John Walker dozens, maybe hundreds of times – and not necessarily from behind the deli counter at the Dudley Tesco where he works.

As well as serving up fresh fish, he works as a TV and film extra and has made more than 2,000 appearances over 14 years in 200 shows.

Whether it is playing a patient in Casualty, a crime officer in Midsomer Murders or a rioter in The Bill, John says he has played more characters than he can remember.

Most of the time, he is simply a face in the crowd or background, dressed up and asked to play out the role of a drinker in a pub in teen soap Hollyoaks; a Victorian man at the races in The Invisible Woman or an office worker in CBBCs Bert and Dickie.

But as well as being a backgrounder, he is also picked to play characters or act as a double for another actor.

He played Thomas Dent, a murderer in the ITV show the Killers; Great Train Robber Jimmy White in ITV drama Mrs Biggs and Professor Lennox in CBBCs Wizards vs Aliens.

He has also acted at Ewen Bremner's double on in shows, including Great Expectations, where he stops a fight between two other characters, played by Robbie Coltrane and Tamzin Outhwaite.

Counter

A world away from his job behind the counter at Tesco Extra, Burnt Tree in Dudley, Mr Walker will pick up between £80 and £280 a day for his screen roles.

This has not only lined his pockets, but it has also seen him find romance – meeting his fiancéé Neilum Raqia, aged 36, on the set of daytime show Doctors nearly five years ago.

"My role was to say to my wife, 'Joanne, she is here talking to Victor'", he said. "While saying it I looked off camera and saw the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen. I said the line a number of times and kept looking at her – straight away off screen we hit it off instantly."

The couple, who live in Holly Road, Dudley, and are to marry in November, now combine their work as extras on TV, and have appeared together on Misfits, Gavin and Stacey and Casualty.

The acting started for John when he spotted an advert to become an extra for a Doctor Who spin-off show for video called Auton 2 in 1998.

Day job – John Walker working at Tesco in Dudley

John Walker on the set of The Invisible Woman

An avid fan of the sci-fi series, John, who then lived in Bath and worked in the head office at Safeway, signed up for the role alongside Nick Briggs, who is the voice of the Daleks, in Dorset. John enjoyed the work so much he signed up to an agency in Bristol, putting himself forward for dozens of roles. Despite working 9am to 5pm for Safeway, the company allowed John to organise his work around his acting.

At his peak in 2005, he was acting as an extra on TV sets once a week. He said: "I was working as everything on everything, and loving it at the same time.

"You are not supposed to appear on rival soaps, but I was the doctor on Coronation Street, Emmerdale and Hollyoaks all in the same week. The roles I was picked to do were always fun, and I find myself very often picked to be a doctor or policeman.

"It's a great chance to get away from real life, have some fun and see some of the stars. Most were great, some not so, but I wouldn't want to name names."

But it is not just random extra roles John and fianceé Neilum get called up for. The couple have regular show characters – best known as a policing pair on Midsomer Murders, Scott and Bailey and DCI Banks.

John said: "People often say "I saw you on TV last night" – I think I've done so much I'm on ITV3 every day.

"It was great first seeing yourself on the screen, but now we're both used to it."

In 2008, John took redundancy to pursue a career in acting and production, but soon found the new career path did not suit him and returned to part-time work.

Asked what makes him a successful extra, John said: "Blending in the background, not making big movements and having the ability to mime rubbish with no-one knowing.

John has written a book on his work called Extra Time: The Real Life Exploits of a Supporting Artist.

NEWS in brief

Poor tickets sales mean no concert

A CHARITY concert in Stourbridge that was due to include a variety of songs from West End has been cancelled due to poor ticket sales.

Performers from Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Company were due to stage A Grand Night for Singing at Stourbridge Town Hall, off Market Street, on February 28.

Organiser Irene Layton, MBE, confirmed it had been cancelled due to "poor ticket sales".

Charity launches laptops appeal

STAFF at a charity which helps people with cerebral palsy and related disabilities have launched an appeal to raise money to buy new laptops to help their work.

Cerebral Palsy Midlands works in Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham, supporting people with physical and learning difficulties.

They want four new laptops to help with a programme which helps people gain everyday skills. To help call Adam Siviter on 0121 427 3182, or send an email to asiviter@cpmids.freeonline.co.uk

Group will put on show songs

HAGLEY Theatre Group is presenting Anything Can Happen at the community centre on March 1 and 2.

The performance will include songs by the adult and youth sections from stage and film musicals including Oliver.

Tickets cost £8, with £6 concessions, and are available from Paddocks Butchers or by telephoning 07907 457217.

Museum holds Crafty sessions

CHILDREN'S craft classes will be held at Broadfield House Glass Museum, Kingswinford.

It is launching monthly sessions for eight to 14-year-olds. They run from 1.30-3.30pm and cost £5.25. The next session is on March 9. Call 01384 815571 for details.

An elegant talk

HAGLEY Wives and Women's Fellowship will hear Sandy Cale talk about Elegant Georgian Worcester at 8pm on March 12 at St Saviour's Church Hall, Hagley.

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NEWS

Church leaders offer the power of prayer

Priest Paul Harrison, the Bishop of Dudley the Rt Rev David Walker and Reverend Diane Cooksey

THE Bishop of Dudley was out in Stourbridge meeting shoppers and collecting prayers.

The Rt Rev David Walker chatted to passers-by and asked for written prayer requests in the town centre.

Senior church leaders toured the area to mark Ash Wednesday and also visited Bromsgrove and Worcester.

The Bishop said: "We know that people really appreciate somebody offering to say a prayer for them.

"In the past we have collected over 120 prayer requests in two hours in one location. We believe that prayer can make a real difference."

The scheme called Pray One for Me is a national initiative inspired by the Bishop of Worcester.

Tomorrow (Friday) bishops in the Church of England will be collecting prayer requests in towns and cities across the country.

MP angry at online job ads

TENS of thousands of jobs, including many in the Dudley borough, are being advertised overseas, it has been revealed.

Dudley North Labour MP Ian Austin is demanding an explanation after finding that 33,000 vacancies were being promoted online via the Europa Job Mobility website.

The jobs are uploaded to the website by Jobcentre Plus, which also advertises them locally.

Mr Austin said the scheme was a scandal at a time when scores of public sector jobs were being axed.

The website lists 41 health service jobs in the Black Country, including 21 posts in Dudley, three in Sandwell, nine in Wolverhampton and eight in Walsall.

In manufacturing, nine jobs are offered in Dudley, six in Wolverhampton and five in Walsall. There are 26 jobs in sales and marketing offered on the Europa website, 18 of them in Wolverhampton.

A motor vehicle practitioner instructor in Staffordshire on a salary of up to £23,382 is being advertised.

Teaching posts account for a large proportion of the 33,911 jobs advertised in the West Midlands.

Around 74 of them have been advertised in the Black Country, including 20 at schools and colleges in Dudley borough.

In Wolverhampton, which has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country, a vacancy has been posted for a job as a trainee chef at an unnamed city hotel. The job pays £104 a week with training provided.

There were 2,301 jobs for teaching professionals in the West Midlands advertised.

Mr Austin has called on the Government to explain why it is promoting public sector jobs abroad while sacking public sector workers at home.

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NEWS

Businesses disrupted by a spate of power cuts

CARS were left stranded up on ramps and gym customers stopped in their tracks in a spate of power cuts on a Stourbridge industrial estate.

by Louise Jew

Businesses on the Mill Race Lane estate, just off Stourbridge ring road, have suffered at least three power cuts – each lasting several hours. Western Power Distribution has apologised to the companies affected and pledged it is doing its best to repair an "intermittent fault" in an underground cable that is causing a sub-station fuse to keep blowing.

But the power company warned there may be further cuts as engineers try to deliberately cause the fuse to blow in an effort to discover the cause of the problem.

Nightmare

"It's been an absolute nightmare," said Linda Hughes, receptionist at Body Wise gym, where dozens of members have had to be sent home or were unable to start their training sessions due to the loss of power.

"We had members in the gym, the lights all went out and, on Friday morning, we couldn't open our electric shutters because of a power cut the night before."

Ben Claridge, supervisor at Kwik Fit, said: "We've had vehicles stuck on ramps, and it's cost us business, as well as inconveniencing our customers."

Philip Battin, managing director of Tile Trend, said: "The disruption has been enormous – and I am now putting together a claim against Western Power Distribution because it's stopped our business.

"We haven't even been able to get the roller shutters up on our warehouse to deliver to customers."

People affected speculated that work on the town's new Tesco could have caused the problem, but a spokesman for Western Power Distribution, said: "We do not believe the fault has anything to do with the work on Tesco."

Van gift for charity

Hospice staff Dan Gilbert, Paul Robinson and Simon Henwood celebrate collecting the van from Mike Brown

STAFF at Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice celebrated receiving a new van thanks to the backing of a Brierley Hill businessman.

Mike Brown, who owns Dreamland Bedding Centre, in Mill Street, Brierley Hill, has always dug deep to support the hospice. His latest gesture has been to buy a Ford Transit for the hospice to use as part of its house clearance service.

Cash raised through delivery charges paid by his customers has been given to the charity.

Hospice business manager Simon Henwood paid tribute to Mr Brown for his continued support and donations.

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It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

Managing Director Brian Stanley feels that it's all about service. 'Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service Stourbridge and the surrounding area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Brian a call for a free quotation on **0800 61 21 118** and he'll be happy to help!

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For most medical problems phone your GP practice for advice or to make an appointment. You should expect to see a GP within 48 hours.

GPs visit patients at home only if they decide there is a medical need. If your surgery is closed and you need urgent advice or treatment call NHS Direct or the GP out-of-hours service.

GP out of hours service

GP out-of-hours

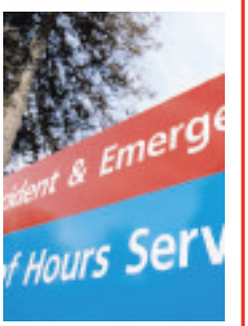
If you need help outside normal hours, phone your GP and follow the recorded advice or ring 0300 555 4566.

This service is for medical problems too urgent to wait until your own GP practice is next open.

You will be given advice over the phone and if necessary arrangements will be made for you to be seen.

Serious injury, sudden severe illness or medical emergency

Go to your nearest hospital A&E department



A&E

Only go to a hospital A&E department in the event of an accident or emergency.

An emergency is a critical or life-threatening situation such as:

- unconsciousness
- suspected broken bones
- heavy blood loss
- suspected heart attack
- deep wounds - such as a stab wound
- breathing difficulties
- chest pain
- head injuries

If you are unsure whether a health problem is an emergency needing A&E treatment then call your GP or NHS Direct for advice.

Call 999 for the ambulance service

999 ambulance

Call 999 for an ambulance if the patient:

- has had chest pains for more than 15 minutes
- is not breathing/is having difficulty breathing/is choking
- is unconscious
- is bleeding heavily
- is in severe abdominal pain
- bleeding from the vagina and could be pregnant
- is in the final stages of labour
- may have had a stroke, fit or convulsion
- may have taken an overdose
- has severe burns
- has suspected head or spinal injuries
- has had a severe allergic reaction

Further instructions will be given over the phone by a specially trained call taker and, if appropriate, an ambulance will be sent.

MEMORY LANE

Securicor guards Harry Pritchard and Jack Ward take possession of electric powered mopeds

Walter Edge on his 1928 Sunbeam

Peter Bidmead passes on his knowledge to youngsters an RAC/ACU motorcycle course

Testament to the two-wheelers

by Toby Neal

Don Higham sets off for work on his 1925 Royal Enfield in September 1976

PETER Bidmead reckoned he was born with two stroke motorcycle fuel in his blood.

Not only had he a collection of vintage motor bikes, but each day he travelled the 20 miles to his works at Burton-on-Trent on his 20-year-old 1,000cc Ariel Square Four combination.

"I just get a tremendous amount of enjoyment riding a bike. I suppose it's in the blood," said works manager Peter, of Mersey Road, Rugeley, in April 1978.

To pass on his knowledge of bikes, Peter taught youngsters how to ride in an RAC/ACU motorcycle course at Fair Oak School, Rugeley.

Supplying

A search through the archives of the *Chronicle*'s sister paper, the *Express & Star*, revealed many photographs about people and their two-wheeled modes of transport.

Securicor guards Harry Pritchard and Jack Ward took possession of electric powered mopeds in December 1973, a time of great worry about fuel prices.

A Brierley Hill factory was supplying what were claimed to be the first electric-powered mopeds in Britain. No petrol, no pollution and virtually noise free – that is the claim for the two-wheeled vehicles made by factory manager Colin Shaw, of Solo Power Equipment.

The story said the first hundred mopeds, which could do p to 25 miles before recharging, had already been bought by Securicor.

In 1967 Walter Edge was found outside his home in Hill Avenue, Lanesfield, Wolverhampton, proudly astride his 1928 long-stroke Sunbeam that he used daily.

Don Higham, of Aldridge, was pictured setting off for work on his 1925 Royal Enfield in September 1976. The Walsall recreation department landscape officer had bought it for £30 and spent five years restoring it.

Mark Wells and Paul Handley, both aged 16, were among Wednesbury mods saying "don't blame us" after complaints about motorcycle gangs which were said to be terrorising people on estates in October 1983.

Paul, of Kent Road, Woods estate, said: "It's ridiculous to say our bikes are high speed. My scooter's top speed is only 25mph."

"Don't blame us" – Mark Wells, left, and Paul Handley

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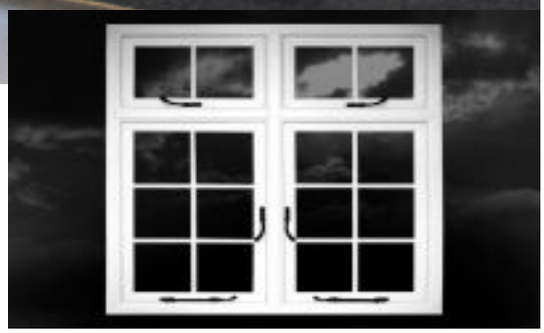

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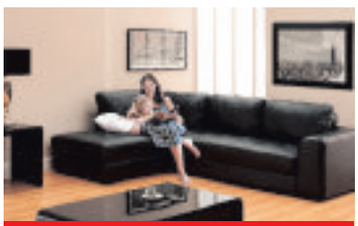

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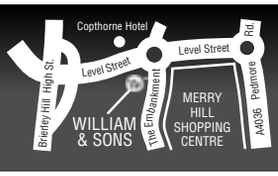

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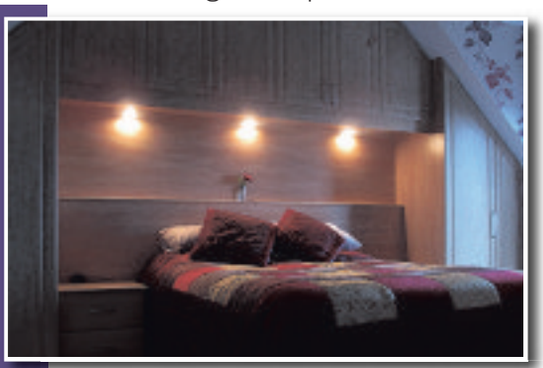

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COMPETITION

Home in on ideas for perfect design

THE National Homebuilding and Renovating Show returns from March 21-24 to provide advice and inspiration to help visitors create their perfect, bespoke property.

And Chronicle readers have the chance of going free as 20 pairs of ticket are up for grabs.

Britain's biggest self-build and renovation event is returning for its 22nd year to the NEC, Birmingham to educate and inspire visitors searching for new and imaginative ways to create their dream home.

Whether you're about to embark on building your own house, remodel your existing property, implement eco savvy technologies or undertake a major extension, the show offers a wealth of design and expertise, no matter the size, scale or stage of your project.

Visitors will be able to see and touch the latest products, learn firsthand about the hottest innovations and trends for 2013 as well as soak up advice from specialist key influencers including Michael Holmes, editor-in-chief of Homebuilding and Renovating magazine and one of the country's leading property experts.

Energy

The Eco Home Show is expected to be a very popular feature this year when adding sustainable features to the home is at the forefront of nearly all self-builders' minds.

With the Government's commitment to carbon reduction, the introduction of the Green Deal, the Renewable Heat Incentive and all UK homes being fitted with smart meters by 2020, homeowners have become increasingly aware of how important it is to live in an energy-efficient home. With this shift in consumer behaviour, the show will be able to meet visitors' requirements for eco knowledge, products and services.

The words 'planning permission' can often put many people off entering into their own self-build – but don't let planning horror stories get you down, head along to the Planning Clinic.

Standard tickets are £12 if booked before 3pm on March 20 or £17 on the door (under 16s free).

Visit www.homebuildingshow.co.uk or call the ticket hotline on 0844 581 1377 (10am-5pm daily)

Plenty of displays to look around and pick up information

Advice is available from Michael Holmes, editor-in-chief of Homebuilding and Renovating magazine

THE NATIONAL HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING SHOW
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HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer this question:

How many years has the show already been at the NEC?

Send your answer on a postcard with your name, address and contact number to Homebuild Competition, Chronicle series (editorial), 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES. Closing date: Thursday, February 28. Usual rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

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Hall campaigners confident

CAMPAIGNERS fighting to save a community hall in Halesowen say they are confident of their goal after drafting a business plan for the future of the centre.

The Hasbury Action Group has put pressure on Dudley Council to stop the sale of the closed-down Sons of Rest building in Alexandra Road since it went on the market last year.

Now the group, fronted by Labour activist Ian Cooper, has drafted a business plan for the council to reopen the centre for nearby community groups again.

The group claims to have found about 20 groups that would use the site – but at a cheaper rate than they faced before the centre closed.

Mr Cooper said: "The reason it closed was because of falling use, mainly down to the fact many of the group were priced out by rising rents.

"This led to the managing committee struggling to keep the place open. Our business plan is different.

"We want to offer well-priced room hire to groups and bring them back to the centre.

"We have found many groups, young and old, keen to use the centre on this basis.

"I'm confident we can do this."

Mr Cooper said the group, which would run the centre on the council's behalf, was pursuing money from grants which could be used on the building.

He said: "The building is in need of some love, inside and out. What we get we will spend on improving the centre."

Residents claim the site should be secured because of its history.

The land on which it was built was donated to the town in 1947 by Halesowen Mayor Lionel Rose.

The building was constructed in 1948 as one of five Sons of Rest sites in Halesowen to be used by war veterans.

It was previously home to Huntingtree Seniors Leisure Centre but the council closed it in 2011 after deeming it surplus to requirements.

It was put on the market last April and more than 200 people have signed a petition against a sale.

The council told the group last year it had received "significant".

Councillor Gaye Partridge, cabinet member for human resources, law and governance, said: "The property is still on the market and we are continuing to look at a number of options for the future of the building, including a possible proposal from the local community."

The action group next meets at the The Huntingtree pub, Alexandra Road, on February 27 starting at 6.30pm.

The Sons of Rest building which is at centre of fight

Hotel work under way

THE next stage of work on a £3.5 million hotel and restaurant in Dudley, creating 25 jobs, is under way. The 63-bedroom Premier Inn and Brewers Fayre Restaurant will be ready for opening at the Castlegate Business Park by autumn.

Work started in November and draining has been installed and roads marked out. The next stage is building the hotel, which will have restaurant and cafe.

The project is led by property developers Stoford and is on land owned by the Government's Homes and Communities Agency.

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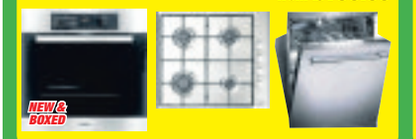

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LETTERS

Gazza not deserving of sympathy

AM I alone in absolutely having no sympathy whatsoever for the self-inflicted plight of Paul "Gazza" Gascoigne.

A once superbly talented footballer, supremely fit, he has degenerated into a shambling alcohol-fuelled wreck, of his own volition.

As is usual in these sad cases, a small army of his former footballing friends have pledged to help him with the cost of his £9,000 per day rehabilitation, led by Gary Lineker and several other footballers together with DJ Chris Evans.

They have sworn to contribute as much money as is necessary to get him through the rehab course at the Cottonwood Treatment Centre, Arizona.

I wonder if his old drinking partner, affectionately known as Five Bellies, will rush with the same alacrity to Gazza's aid as he did to the bar when Gazza was paying for all they could drink.

I think it was some 30 years ago, when another great football legend was stricken down with cancer, I don't recall the boys clubbing together for Bobby Moore although, to be fair, there wasn't a great deal they could have done in his case.

I can only wish him well, and hope he makes a reasonable recovery, though I fear a complete one is doubtful, as this terrible illness is rarely completely cured.

His worldwide army of fans will consider themselves lucky to have television recordings of his towering talent on the football pitch.

Thanks for that Gazza. If only your commonsense brain had matched your footballing brain, who knows?

B PARSONS,
Millard Road,
Coseley.

There is no justification for wasting our money

I NOTE the electorate in Dudley borough have voted overwhelmingly against an increase in council tax levy.

No doubt Dudley's councillors now are looking for areas where savings can be made.

I suggest two. Centro, who make a levy against all the metropolitan boroughs in the West Midlands could have their precept cut significantly.

They recently wasted thousands changing every bus stop. The stops which were replaced were perfectly adequate. Then Dudley MBC embarked on a replacement of street name signs across the borough. In Halesowen they removed perfectly adequate, and readable signs. Can there be any justification for wasting our money in this way?

PETER BRIDGENS,
Lansdowne Road,
Halesowen.

LETTERS to the Editor

POST
Stourbridge Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton WV1 1ES

E-MAIL
Stourbridge.chrons@expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Parking charges are killing town centres

I HAD to smile on the topic of the demise of town centres. Well you might ask why ? Is it because we have to pay a fortune to park?

Some town centres are pedestrianised to keep vehicles out, and a good job they are too. The cost of parking keeps going up every year. Folks like me stop going to town centres. This has a knock-on effect for shop owners, loss of trade, plus if you work in a town centre you too have to pay to park not a very attractive situation to be in to run a business.

People choose shopping malls or supermarkets. Even where you are charged for using a supermarket car park you can get a refund on your shopping bill. It is an epidemic in parking charges. Councils are now in a position where they cannot reverse the charges, due to the revenue it produces, so the rot continues.

Don't councils get the message? My local town is Dudley, I've not shopped there for years.

I only go to the town hall.

J ELLIMAN,
Balfour Road, Kingswinford.

Shopping malls have also had their day

WHY our town centres are in crisis: The answer stares out from the page – the one showing the Merry Hill centre with shoppers walking in the dry and bright aisles, the other showing a wet and windblown street in Wolverhampton.

There is no contest when you add the free parking with security staff patrolling the car parks, rather than wardens looking to fine anyone who overstays their welcome.

But all is not well for the retail parks either, with large areas now empty.

The town centres have had their day and the days of the ever expanding shopping malls could soon be a memory too.

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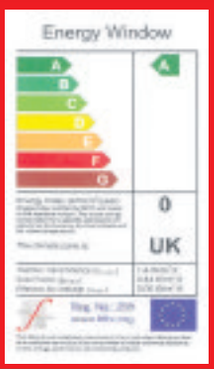

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CLUB NEWS

WI guest proves a glass act

BILBROOK WI

FOLLOWING the usual business, president Julie Hammersley introduced the speaker for the February meeting, Cas Bailey.

Cas had visited before to talk about her life during her 32 years in the police force. This talk, "Cuffs to Glass", was about what came after she had retired.

Looking for something completely different and challenging to do she noticed a magazine advert for a 12-month course in glass techniques at Dudley College.

Classes were held in a disused glass factory in Brierley Hill. There were 12 students in her class ranging in age from their 20s to 60s.

Cas enjoyed her time there so much that she enrolled and completed a second year course.

After two years at college, Cas rented a studio workshop and started a small business. When the studio was sold, Cas had to look for new premises. She bought a new house and had a log house built in the garden for a workshop.

Cas explained the various techniques and brought some beautiful samples of her work. She can now be found selling her creations and taking commissions at Shugborough on crafts days.

Win Poulton gave a vote of thanks and te evening was rounded off with the raffle and refreshments.

The AGM will be on Tuesday, March 12 at the village hall, Joey's Lane at 7.30pm.

Historian gives reel insight into cinemas

Historian Ned Williams addressed the meeting

THE BLACK COUNTRY SOCIETY

THE Kingswinford branch of the Black Country Society met at St Mary's Church Hall on January 16 when historian Ned Williams was the speaker. He is a member and past president of the society.

Ned was born in Ilford, Essex but has lived in the Black Country since 1962. He taught at Wulfrun College for 30 years and then for 10 years with the Workers Educational Association.

A prolific writer, he now has 48 books to his name, the most recent ones being Black Country Cinemas and Black Country Theatres. His illustrated talk was of cinemas and entertainment in the Black Country. He gave a fascinating talk about cinemas no longer with us and explained that the buildings are often now used for other purposes such as bingo halls and warehouses. Many of them still retain the art deco styles inside.

He spoke about theatres including the now defunct Dudley Hippodrome. Ned also talked about early travelling players, circuses and fairgrounds and famous people who ran them events – Pat Collins being one.

The chairman thanked Ned for his talk and coffee was served.

Perils of public speaking

WALSALL CENTRAL TG

THE February meeting was opened by chairman Brenda White, who conducted the business.

Due to the closure of Mellish Townswomen's Guild, some of their members joined with the Central Guild who were very happy to welcome them. Speaker for the evening was Pamela Wheat, who gave an interesting talk on the "Perils of Public Speaking".

The next date for members will be the Annual General Meeting, taking place at 7pm on Tuesday, March 5 in the Mellish Room at Central Hall Methodist Church, Walsall.

This will include a bring and buy sale.

NEWS

Pupils' show has their school rocking

Pupils from Ridgewood High School in rehearsal for their big show We Will Rock You which was a sell-out

YOUNG performers at Stourbridge's Ridgewood High School entertained audiences when they performed the West End favourite We Will Rock You. More than 250 pupils were involved in the show last week.

The show, which featured songs by Queen, was sold out for three performances. Student Kathryn Irwin, aged 15, who played Killer Queen, said: "It was a really demanding, yet rewarding show. I'm now in Year 10 and I've been involved in every Ridgewood School production since I started in Year 7."

Police appeal over assault at bar

One of images

POLICE have released pictures of two people wanted in connection with an assault in Stourbridge that left a man needing 15 stitches.

The 22-year-old victim was in Chicago's bar, Rye Market, and suffered black eyes, cuts to the back of his head and severe swelling to his jaw.

Police hope someone may recognise the men in CCTV images from early on December 2.

Dc Martin Wynn said: "The victim had been in the bar with a friend a short time before he was assaulted. We know that he and his friend were deliberately antagonised by two other men inside the venue.

"All four were asked to leave by security staff and it was just after the men had left the club that the attack happened at around 2am. I am keen to hear from anyone who either saw the assault or who recognises the two people in these images."

Anyone with information is asked to call Force CID in Harborne on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

One of men sought

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NEWS

Phone row ended with souvenir knife stab

A KNIFE bought as a holiday souvenir was used to stab a man in a Black Country street, a judge was told. Carl Brookes grabbed the knife, from a Thai monk's shrine, from the stand in his porch where it was kept for years.

by John Scott

hghThe 37-year-old stormed into Chapel Street, Pensnett, and plunged it into the abdomen of Adam Willis, husband of his ex-partner, Mr Mohammed Hafeez, prosecuting, told Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Mr Willis had two hand wounds but escaped serious injury and, despite exploratory surgery, left hospital next day.

Realised

Brookes admitted wounding Mr Willis on July 18 and was jailed for 16 months.

An insulting text message by Brooks to his former partner upset her husband and led to a "heated" phone call between the two men.

Mr Hafeez said: "Her husband went to the home of the defendant after words had been exchanged and threats made. He must have realised there would be some trouble when he attended the address."

Brookes came out and a fight flared that was split up by a relative of the defendant who lived in the same street.

"Brookes went back into his house, grabbed the knife and returned to stab Mr Willis," concluded Mr Hafeez.

Mr Simon Rippon, defending, said: "He was an idiot to respond in the way he did.

"The knife was a souvenir from a holiday in Thailand some years previously and came from a monk's shrine.

"Unfortunately it came readily to hand as he struggled to deal with the situation."

Jolene leaps into action for race

Jolene Spillane prepares to take part in the Race for Life

BRAVE Stourbridge mother Jolene Spillane is taking cancer head-on – and urging other women to join her in the Race for Life. Holding a sign vowing "Cancer, we're coming to get you", 30-year-old Jolene is joining with a group of her friends to jog five kilometres in Cancer Research UK's Race for Life at Himley Hall, Dudley, next July.

Jolene, of Union Street, said she felt like her "world had collapsed" when she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer six months ago. "I thought it was all over," said Jolene, mother of a five-year-old son, Jacob. "But luckily they caught it in time."

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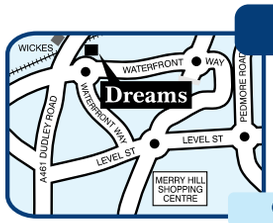

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New community chairman all set to brush up centre

THE new chairman of Lye Community Association is contemplating his first challenge – revitalising the town's community centre.

Abdul Qadus, aged 55, has just been elected chairman of the association and is now on the hunt for help and funds to redecorate the building on Crosswalks Road.

Mr Qadus, a former Lye and Wollescote ward councillor, said: "It has not been redecorated for about five years or so and needs some painting and varnishing mainly."

The Community Payback Scheme, which runs community service placements for those serving criminal sentences, has offered the labour but now Mr Qadus needs to find an estimated £600 for materials.

He hopes a few local business might step up and offer a helping hand.

Determined

He said: "It's a beautiful community centre and was built in the late 1960s.

"It's well-used by a number of groups, including the Active Age group, disabled learning and English for speakers of other languages.

"I'm determined to get the centre more widely used by the community and groups from outside the community as well, the churches and mosques, too."

Mr Qadus is also looking for six people who might be able to give some of their time as trustees for the community centre.

The community centre, in the Claycroft area of Lye, was closed for a short period in 2010 after the rat population in the town got out of control. The community group's AGM will be held next month.

Mr Qadus said a date for the meeting would be confirmed in the coming weeks.

He said he hoped to discuss how to encourage the wider community to use the centre and make people aware of the facilities on offer.

Abdul Qadus, Pauline Smith, Christine Squires, of the centre, with users Farzand Ali, Mohammed Hanif, Mukahtar Ali, of the Active Age Group

Aiden's art on display

A TODDLER from Tividale has created a piece of artwork for an exhibition at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Aiden Bourne, aged three, painted a colourful circus-themed canvas featuring a clown and trapeze artist.

The work is one of 150 pieces created by the hospital's children and young people as part of their 150th birthday celebrations.

Patients were asked to paint what they thought could make their hospital better and some of the ideas included nurses on roller skates, robot doctors and a cupboard full of kidneys so that children didn't have to be on a waiting list for a transplant.

Parking will be restriction to beat congestion

by Andrew Turton

PARKING and waiting restrictions will come into force on Brierley Hill High Street as part of a congestion-busting multi-million pound scheme, council bosses revealed.

A trial to cut traffic in the town centre starts this weekend, marking the final stage of £27 million road scheme aimed at boosting trade and cutting traffic jams.

Traders have long campaigned for bays to stop people parking up on double yellow lines and stopping buses and lorries using the busy high street.

Four new bays allowing people to park up along the street will be introduced on Sunday. Four separate disabled parking areas will also be created near Brierley Hill Police Station.

A full parking ban will be introduced down the opposite length of the street accessing Brierley Hill Library and the indoor market. Loading space for goods lorries delivering to the stores will also be created.

If the trial is a success, it will be made permanent.

The £100,000 project is the final stage of the wider £27m project creating the Venture Way parallel bypass which began six years ago.

Chairman of Brierley Hill Traders Association, Shane Birch-Bastock, welcomed the news.

"The main problem on the high street has always been parking as people just park up any old way, blocking the buses, so it needed better managing and hopefully this will work with it just down one side," he said.

"We need all the help we can get at the moment as traders on the high street so creating on-street parking should help."

Parking will be limited to one hour between 7am and 7pm Monday to Saturday with no return allowed within two hours.

Murals to honour two famous sons

MURALS honouring two of Halesowen's most famous sons will be painted for the town's Cornbow Hall. They will pay tribute to poet William Shenstone, who designed The Leasowes park, and novelist Francis Brett Young.

Dudley borough artist Steve Field has been asked to design a two-part mural for the main activity room. It will be unveiled in 2014 – a significant anniversary year for both of the writers. An art gallery will also be created in the foyer to be used by local artists and art groups.

Councillor David Vickers, who represents Halesowen South, has welcomed the project. "There are very important people in Halesowen's history. Next year will be the 300th anniversary of William Shenstone's birth and the 130th anniversary of the birth of Francis Brett Young and also the 60th anniversary of his death," he said.

"Cornbow Hall is the best used hall in the borough. There are 70 different groups which meet there so the artwork will be seen by a lot of people. The art gallery will also be in demand and it's a great way to recognise the achievements of both men."

Special night at pub for Roddy's warm-up

HE'S played in front of 80,000 in London's Hyde Park and up to 130,000 on a Denmark stage – but for his latest gig The Specials guitarist, Roddy Radiation Byers, just happened to perform for 70 people at a Brierley Hill boozer.

The founder member of the ska band performed with his group Skabilly Rebels at Brockmoor House as a last warm-up gig before going back on tour to the USA with The Specials next month and around the UK in May.

The set featured many of the hits of the Coventry-based group. The gig was arranged through friend Ed Taylor who was also performing with his group Double Bass on the night.

Roddy said: "Ed is an old friend and he just offered us a gig and I haven't got any gigs before I go to the states with The Specials so I would rather be playing at the Brockmoor House than sitting at home. We've played in front of 130,000-people crowds in Denmark but you can only see the first hundred people anyway so numbers don't really make much difference, in fact I get more nervous playing to these kinds of gigs."

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Amblecote
Amblecote Christian Centre Brettell Lane, 9.30am Tel: Aimee 07967 771001

Wollaston
The Ridge Primary School, Gregory School, 7.00pm Tel: Pauline 07941 282122

Quarry Bank
Thorns Primary School Thorns Road, 4.30pm & 6.30pm Tel: Lisa 01384 820587

Lye
Salvation Army 55 High Street, 7.30pm Tel: Kerry 01384 833812
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Wordsley
Ashwood Park Primary School, Bells Lane, 7.00pm Tel: Ian 01384 827999

Dudley Wood
Methodist Church Quarry Road 9.30am Tel: Lisa 01384 820587

Halesowen
Halesbury School, Feldon Lane, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Dawn 07859 010175

Netherton
Cole Street Methodist Church, Cole Street 5.30pm & 7pm Tel: Heather 01562 851746

TUESDAY

Wollaston
St James C of E Primary School, Kingsway, 7pm Tel: Delwyn 01562 887922

Woodsetton
Bramford Primary School, Park Road Entrance, 7pm Tel: Wendy 07587 594752

TUESDAY

Upper Gornal
Upper Gornal Methodist Church, Spills Meadow (off Kent Street), 7.00pm Tel: Lynn 07963539384

Hasbury/Halesowen
Christian Fellowship 26 Albert Road 9.30am & 11.30am Tel: Michaela 0121 602 3267

Halesowen
Lutley Community Centre, Brook Willow Road, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Michaela 0121 602 3267

Pedmore
Hob Green School, Hob Green Road, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Paula 07846 847068

Wordsley
Richardson Hall, Lawnswood Road,10am Tel Ian: 01384 827999

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Peters Hill Primary School, Peters Hill Road, 6pm,7.30pm Tel: Lynne 01384 455427

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Gigmill Primary School The Broadway, 7pm Tel: Aimee 07967 771001

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Zoar Methodist Church, Abbey Road, 5.00pm & 7pm Tel: Sue 01384 211425

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Sainsbury's (Savacentre) Freeth Street, 6pm & 7.15pm Tel: Ann 0121 422 3296

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WEDNESDAY

Brockmoor
Brockmoor Community Centre, Pensnett Road, 10am Tel: Ian 01384 827999

WEDNESDAY

Stourbridge
Territorial Army Centre, Wiggin House, Swinford Road, 9.30am Tel: Marie 01384 893001

Oldswinford
St Mary's Church,Hall, Rectory Road, 4pm, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Kerry 01384 833812

Amblecote
Amblecote Primary School, School Drive 7.00pm Tel: Caroline 01562 888315

Lower Gornal
The Straits Primary School, Longfellow Road, (entrance Milton Crescent), 7.00pm Tel: Wendy 07587 594752

Brierley Hill
Wthymoor Primary School, Gayfield Avenue, 7pm Tel: Lynne 01384 455427

Kinver
Brindley Heath Junior School, Enville Road, 7pm Tel: Ian 01384 827999

Tividale
St Michaels Church, Tividale Road, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Kenton 07982 408088

Netherton
Champions Church, St Giles Street, (Off Halesowen Road) 7.00pm Tel: Heather 01562 851746

Blackheath
Central Methodist Church High Street, 10am, 4pm & 6pm Tel: Ann 0121 422 3296

Dudley/Upper Gornal
Bishop Milner R.C. School, Burton Road 7pm Tel Sue: 01902 882323

Old Hill
Holy Trinity Church, Halesowen Road, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Jill 01384 562102

WEDNESDAY

Quinton
Four Dwellings High School, Dwellings Lane, 7pm Tel: Elaine 0121 5506414

Kingswinford
Royal British Legion, Summerhill, 3.30pm, 5.00pm & 6.30pm Tel: Ann 01384 74864

Holly Hall
Holly Hall School, Scotts Green Close, 7pm Tel: Tommy 07736 679559

THURSDAY

Stourbridge
Greenfield Primary School, Hill Street, 7.00pm Tel: Marie 01384 893001
Parking on playground

Brierley Hill
Nine Locks Community Centre, Hill Street, 9.15am Tel: Gillian 01384 830929

Stourbridge
St Thomas Church Hall, Market Street, 10.00am Tel: John 01384 423616

Hagley
Hagley Primary School, Park Road, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Paula 07846 847068

Hawbush
Oakfield Centre, Brettell Lane, 5.00pm & 7.00pm Tel: John 01384 423616

Halesowen
St Peter's Church, Hiplands Road, 5.30pm & 7.30pm Tel: Elaine 0121 550 6414

THURSDAY

Cradley
Nether End Neighbourhood Centre, Mogul Lane, 5.15pm & 7.15pm Tel: Amanda 07862 274058

Cradley Heath
Salvation Army, Meredith Street, 9.30am & 7.00pm Tel: Kim 0121 559 1099

Pensnett /Bromley
Liberal Club, 102 High Street, 4.00pm, 6.00pm Tel: Gillian 01384 830929

Sedgley/Upper Gornal
St Chads & All Saints Social Club, High Holborn, Dudley Road, 5.00pm & 7.00pm Tel: Sue 01902 882323

Dudley
Central Methodist Church, Cross Street, 10.00am, 12 noon, 5.00pm & 7.00pm Tel: Sue 01384 211425

FRIDAY

Kingswinford
St Mary's Church Hall The Village, 10.00am Tel: Sue 07825 354224

Halesowen
Members Club, Hagley Road, 10.00am Tel: Jill 01384 562102

SATURDAY

Lower Gornal
Roberts Primary School,Robert Street, 9.30am Tel: Tommy 07736679559

Hawbush
Oakfields Community Centre, Brettel Lane, 9.30am Tel: Jo 07725987340

Cradley
Nether End Neighbourhood Centre, Mogul Lane, 9am & 10.30am Tel: Amanda 07862 274058

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NEWS

Luke sets challenge over centre's art

Artist Luke Perry with assistant librarian Wendy Tibbetts, left, and library assistant Louise Moore, who are wearing moustaches in the style of Luke – to launch the artwork sessions for the redeveloped Crown Centre

BLACK Country industrial artist Luke Perry is posing a question to residents after being given the task to create artwork to take pride of place inside Stourbridge's redeveloped Crown Centre.

The stylish piece of metal art would be suspended above the entrance to Stourbridge Library which forms a focal point for the centre surrounding it.

Mr Perry has been commissioned by supermarket giant Tesco, which is behind the development scheme.

But he said residents' views will help inspire the final design. A number of workshops were due to be held this week at the library for people to give their own ideas which could form part of the new artwork.

"We want to get people involved and I'm really interested to hear what they'd like to see feature in the artwork," said the 29-year-old from Cradley Heath.

Freedom

"The town has a real industrial heritage and we'd love to reflect that.

"Even though it is Tesco paying for the artwork ,we have freedom to do what we want. It's important to get it right as it will be seen by generations of people in the future."

Mr Perry says initial ideas are based around literature and books and would hang from the new atrium linking the library and the rest of the new shopping centre containing the Tesco supermarket.

It would be made from stainless steel but could be treated in different ways, including brushed, to give the desired effect.

The workshops will take place at 10am at the library off Market Street on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

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Facts & Figures

Chip Week - facts and figures (18-24 February 2013)

1. More than 1.6 million tonnes of potatoes are made into chips every year in the UK - weighing the same as over 14,000 blue whales or 4,000 jumbo jets.
2. The land required to grow potatoes for chips is 33,664 hectares - big enough to fit London's Hyde Park 237 times, or 47,000 Wembley football pitches.
3. Over 250 million fish and chip meals are sold in the UK each year.
4. In one year we eat nearly three billion meals containing chips, with dinnertime the most popular time to eat them (64%) and tea time the second favourite (24%).
5. Brits use at least 26 different words for fish and chips.
6. Using the right spuds for chips can make all the difference - to ensure your chips are lovely and fluffy try King Edward or Maris Piper.
7. Fish and chips outsell Indian takeaways by two to one.
8. The world's largest fish and chip portion was made in July 2012 by Fish and Chips Ltd, London. The fish weighed in at 47.75kg and the chips 23.5kg, breaking the previous Guinness World Record which was held by the Wensleydale Heifer pub.
9. Celebrity chip fans include Rihanna, Kate Moss and David Walliams - and Michelle Obama recently revealed that her biggest food weakness is French fries.
10. A survey of 1,000 adults shows 'chip shop chips' are the nation's favourite chips with nearly half (45%) of all respondents putting them first, followed by French fries (16%), oven chips (14%), potato wedges (8%) crinkle cut chips (7%) and curly fries (7%).
11. The survey also shows that where we live affects our chip choices, with people in the South preferring salt and vinegar on their portion while the Scottish are more likely than people in any other region to choose a portion of curly fries. People in the Midlands have a fondness for curry sauce and cheese with their portion; the Welsh are more likely than other regions to eat their chips straight from the oven; and a quarter of Londoners favour the French fry.

Source: www.chips.lovepotatoes.co.uk

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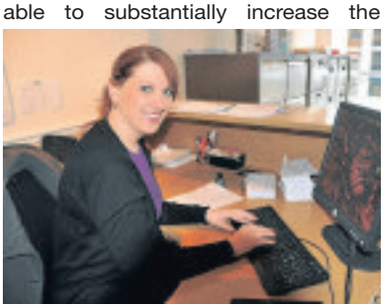
When Capital Financial Management, the established Debt Advisory Service in Halesowen, learned of the number of unscrupulous claims management companies misrepresenting consumers entitlements to reclaim Payment Protection Insurance they decided to do something about it. Simon Bancroft, Company Director and non-practising barrister said; “We have been advising local residents in respect of Debt Problems for a number of years. Many of our clients were persuaded to take out PPI when applying for loans and credit cards and were often told that they would not be granted the facility unless they took out PPI. In many cases consumers are not even aware that PPI was added to their loans. Unfortunately however, many companies have set up on the back of the mis-selling scandal some of which have adopted the approach of cold calling and making false representations”.

Often recorded messages are played to consumers promising to process their refund or that they are entitled to £3000.00 compensation. These representations are made without any substance whatsoever. It is in fact a criminal offence for companies to make such calls and anyone receiving such a call should immediately hang up. Simon continued; “If anyone is unsure whether they had PPI or have not yet reclaimed it is imperative to get professional face to face advice.”

Capital Financial Management operate on a no win no fee basis and do not ask their PPI clients to pay anything up front. As one happy client stated; “I am delighted. 70% of £16,000 was much better than 100% of nothing!” another said “CFM reduced all of my loan and credit card payments by 80% three years ago. This saved me over £650.00 a month. To now get a lump sum of £4800.00 is fantastic.”

Capital Financial Management make no secret of the fact that it is possible for consumers to reclaim themselves. However, as the company point out, in addition to reclaiming the PPI premiums it is important to ask for compound interest and statutory simple interest. Some consumers will simply not have the time or inclination to deal with this and those that do will often give up when the banks final response is ‘No’. CFM will rigorously pursue the matter with the Financial Ombudsman Service and on occasions have been able to substantially increase the



amount which otherwise may have been accepted.

It is important to note that there are deadlines and those who think they may have a claim should act now. “It is incorrect to say that consumers have only 6 years to claim. We have many clients who have claimed for loans sold in the 1990’s. However now that the issue is within the public knowledge time limits will apply”.

If you, a friend or colleague have not yet claimed for the refund to which you are entitled or you are experiencing debt problems, you are urged to contact Simon and the team on 0121 585 5810.

What's On! Stourbridge

Testament to the success of Joseph

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, The Grand, W-ton

GO go Joseph... there just seems no stopping the theatrical juggernaut this Old Testament pop musical has become.

First conceived by Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber more than 40 years ago, its popularity does not decline and it could lay claim to being the nation's favourite musical.

This latest touring production from Bill Kenwright goes all out to please, the songs come slick and fast – mostly parodies from country music to Elvis Presley and Parisian chanson – delivered by an energetic cast.

It tells the Book of Genesis tale of how favourite son Joseph is sold into slavery by his 11 jealous brothers, ends up in Egypt where, after a spell in jail, he becomes the pharoah's right hand man and is finally reconciled with those sinful siblings and reunited with his father.

Keith Jack, runner-up in the TV search for Joseph, is a charismatic leading man with a smile that lit up the theatre and delivered his big number, Any Dream Will Do, at least three times. He had excellent support from Lauren Ingram as the Narrator.

The night ended with a crowd-pleasing Joseph megamix for which the Grand audience were encouraged to get out of their seats and dance.

Leon Burakowski

Glamorous home town role as Sophie joins High Society

THE GLITZY world of American 'High Society' in the 1940s will be brought to the stage at Wolverhampton Grand next week.

Among performers preparing for curtain-up on the musical is Sophie Bould, a former member of South Staffs Musical Theatre Company who is now a professional actor.

The former pupil of St Dominic's School, in Brewood, previously wowed West End audiences playing Liesl in The Sound of Music after first walking the boards at the Grand.

Now aged 31, she said: "I was eight when the theatre company were performing South Pacific and they needed a youngster to play a little French girl. My mum Veronica was with the company. I was at the Grand Theatre for a week and I was bitten by the bug."

Sophie Bould with Daniel Boys in the Cole Porter musical High Society

Well Did You Evah and True Love are two of the most famous songs from High Society, which will feature Sophie alongside Daniel Boys and former Robin of Sherwood Michael Praed.

The Cole Porter musical was a 1956 film with Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong. That was itself based on play The Philadelphia Story, made into a 1940 film with Katherine Hepburn, Cary Grand and James Stewart.

High Society is at the Grand Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, then at Birmingham Hippodrome from May 14 to 18.

Acrobatic action at The Moscow State Circus, coming to Wolverhampton Civic Hall

Circus and Disney fun

ICONS of Russian and American popular culture are coming to the West Midlands to entertain families.

Disney On Ice returned to Birmingham's LG Arena yesterday (Wednesday) for a five-day run of their new extravaganza Let's Party.

A medley of festivals from around the world, it is hosted by Mickey and Minnie Mouse and features favourites from such movies as Lilo & Stich and Toy Story, plus an array of Disney Princesses and Villains.

Then next week the Moscow State Circus rolls into Wolverhampton, swapping a big top for the Civic Hall on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 26 and 27, for a show based on a Russian legend.

Babushkin Sekret concerns a search for a chair containing treasure.

The story will involve performances by high-wire artists, acrobats, jugglers and clowns.

Love ballads and Valentine lingerie

Nerina Pallot
Glee Club, Birmingham

IN between regaling the packed Glee Club audience with opinions of dodgy Valentine lingerie and Sharon Osbourne's plastic surgery, Brit Award-nominated singer/songwriter Nerina Pallott entertained her fans with the last leg of her Lonely Valentine tour.

She opened on the baby grand piano with a soft ballad, her clear voice sounding not unlike Katie Melua but with a harder edge. Moving into Driving to Idaho she exuded a rich sound which began to show the range of her voice.

Pallot kept with the ballads through All Bets Are Off which was a more soulful song telling of disastrous love which fitted in with the theme of the tour. She tried out one of her new songs, Once, before clomping across the stage in her crimson 50s-style dress to pick up her acoustic guitar.

She was interrupted by her husband letting her know their baby son, who was ill, was now alright and as she tried to move into her next song her emotions got the better of her and she broke down in tears of relief.

The plucky Pallot was soon back on track and quickly moved into more of her repertoire including Mr King, Real Late Starter, Turn Me On Again and even at one stage allowed the audience to throw in a request.

Danny Farragher

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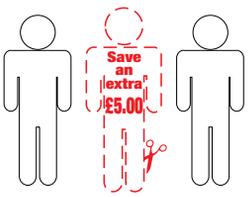

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What's On!

SATURDAY'S TV 23.02.13

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE

Sunetra Sarker

Casualty
BBC1, 8.40pm
Last week we met estranged couple David and Kate. When we catch up with them here, he struggles to keep his temper in check after their son Nathan is rushed to the ED after collapsing while on a day out with Kate. The fact that Kate then announces she wants access to their son, coupled with bad news about the youngster's future treatment, stuns David so much, he decides to do something very foolish indeed. Meanwhile, Zoe returns, goes berserk at Ash and then offers him a permanent job. Also starring Patrick Robinson.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Nigel Slater's Simple Cooking. (R) **12.00** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **12.15** Football Focus. **1.00** Bargain Hunt. **2.00** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. **4.20** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **4.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. England v France (Kick-off 5.00pm).
7.00 Let's Dance for Comic Relief. Steve Jones and Alex Jones present the second heat of the contest, featuring Jon Culshaw, Antony Cotton, members of the cast of Waterloo Road, Kim Woodburn and Rosemary Shrager.
8.25 The National Lottery Saturday Night Draws. New series. OJ Borg presents as the balls are set rolling to decide the all-important numbers. Including the Lotto, Thunderball and Lotto Plus 5 draws.
8.40 Casualty. Zoe returns from sick leave and clashes with Ash, Jeff must persuade a man to act in his son's best interests and Fletch is determined to help an elderly gentleman in love.
9.30 Mrs Brown's Boys. Agnes and the Brown family await the fruits of their fraud after faking Grandad's death to get a payout, but the insurance company starts to grow suspicious. (R)
10.00 BBC News; Weather.
10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches; National Lottery Update.
11.40 The Football League Show.
12.55 Weatherview. **1.00** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Close. **7.30** Great British Menu. (R) **8.00** Great British Menu. (R) **8.30** Great British Menu. (R) **9.00** Great British Menu. (R) **9.30** Great British Menu. (R) **10.00** A History of Britain by Simon Schama. (R) **11.00** Meet the Ancestors. (R) **11.30** Map Man. (R) **12.00** Indian Food Made Easy. (R) **12.30** Mastermind. (R) **1.00** University Challenge. (R) **1.30** Talking Pictures. **2.15 Film:** The Black Shield of Falworth. (1954) **3.50** Coast. **4.00** Flog It! **4.30** Final Score. **5.15** Live Cycling: World Track Championships.
7.00 Top Gear. Jeremy Clarkson puts the new Kia Cee'd through a peculiar road test, Richard Hammond drives the Mastretta MXT, and three high-performance hatchbacks are tested on the track. (R)
8.00 Dad's Army. The platoon has a steam engine problem. (R)
8.30 A Wolf Called Storm: Natural World Special. Cameraman Jeff Turner spends a year following the lives of a wolf and its pack in the north of Canada, learning how the animals survive in the harsh wilderness. (R)
9.30 Howard Goodall's Story of Music. The composer examines the ways in which modernism and the birth of recorded sound in the late 19th century changed the way music was played, heard and distributed.
10.30 Funny Business. Comedians who work on cruise ships. Last in the series.
11.30 Film: The Men Who Stare at Goats. (2009) Satirical comedy, starring George Clooney and Ewan McGregor.
12.55 Close.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. **6.10** Handy Manny. **6.25** The Hive. (R) **6.35** The Hive. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan. (R) **7.00** Dino Dan. (R) **7.10** Canimals. (R) **7.20** Canimals. (R) **7.25** Bookaboo. **7.40** Matt Hatter Chronicles. (R) **8.05** Kick Buttowski – Suburban Daredevil. **8.15** Kick Buttowski – Suburban Daredevil. **8.30** Victorious. (R) **9.00** Jessie. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **10.25** My Tasty Travels with Lynda Bellingham. (R) **11.25** Dinner Date. **12.25** Countrywise. **12.40** ITV News; Weather. **12.45 Film:** Carry On Up the Jungle. (1970) **2.30** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R) **3.30** Midsomer Murders. (R) **5.30** Regional Programme; Weather. **5.45** ITV News; Weather.
6.00 Totally You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a review of the show's most comical clips, featuring amazing accidents, cute kids and the funniest members of the animal kingdom. (R)
7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. New series. The Geordie duo's entertainment show returns, featuring a performance by Robbie Williams in the first edition. Danny DeVito is in the voiceover booth.
8.20 Take Me Out. A rugby player, a student, a morris dancer and a security adviser enter the love lift in the hope of impressing 30 single women. Paddy McGuinness presents. Last in the series.
9.50 The Jonathan Ross Show. Celebrity interviews.
10.50 ITV News; Weather.
11.05 Film: The Gauntlet. (1977) Action adventure, starring Clint Eastwood.
1.05 Jackpot247. **3.00** In Plain Sight. (R) **3.45** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.05 Sali Mali. (R) **6.10** The Hoobs. (R) **6.35** The Hoobs. (R) **7.00** Will & Grace. (R) **7.25** Freesports on 4. **7.55** The Morning Line. **8.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.20** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.50** Frasier. (R) **10.20** Frasier. (R) **10.50** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.20** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.45** The Simpsons. (R) **12.10** The Simpsons. (R) **12.40** Secret Millionaire Ireland. (R) **1.45** Channel 4 Racing. **4.05** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.35** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.05** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.40** Come Dine with Me. (R)
6.10 Come Dine with Me. Rose Proenca hosts the final dinner party in Portsmouth. (R)
6.40 Channel 4 News.
6.55 4thought.tv.
7.00 The Queen's Mother in Law. The story of Prince Philip's mother Princess Alice, a great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria who turned her back on royal life to work with the poor in Greece. (R)
8.00 Kevin McCloud's Man Made Home. The Grand Designs presenter builds an oak-framed cabin using recycled materials, aiming to create a retreat where he can get away from the rat race. (R)
9.00 Film: Terminator Salvation. (2009) In the future, resistance fighter John Connor leads a war against the deadly robots that have taken over the world. Sci-fi thriller sequel, with Christian Bale and Sam Worthington.
11.10 Film: Rising Sun. (1993) Thriller, starring Sean Connery and Wesley Snipes.
1.35 Southland. **2.15** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.20** Deal or No Deal. (R) **5.15** Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** Power Rangers Samurai. (R) **10.35** Batman: The Brave and the Bold. **11.10** Looney Tunes. (R) **11.20** Looney Tunes. (R) **11.25** Monkey Life. (R) **11.55** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.55 Film:** I Dream of Murder. (2006) **2.40 Film:** Corrina, Corrina. (1994) **4.55** 5 News Weekend. **5.00 Film:** Columbo: Ransom for a Dead Man. (1971)
6.55 CSI: NY. Mac tells Flack about the persistent anonymous calls he is receiving, and the team investigates a string of audacious robberies carried out by crooks equipped with hi-tech gadgetry. (R)
7.40 NCIS. Ducky is attacked by a knife-wielding woman who accuses him of war crimes, alleging he tortured and killed her brother in Afghanistan in the early 1980s. Starring David McCallum. (R)
8.35 NCIS. The agents investigate the private life of a Navy captain whose actions may have led to his death, while McGee finds a love interest on the internet. (R)
9.30 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. Benson and Stabler are called upon to investigate when a man contacts the police after discovering a dead woman in his bed.
10.25 Law & Order: Criminal Intent.
11.25 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. (R)
12.15 SuperCasino. **4.00** HouseBusters. (R) **4.25** Divine Designs. (R) **4.50** Rough Guide To. (R) **5.05** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.15** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.40** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Merlin **7.45** Doctor Who **8.35 Film:** National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007) **10.30** World's Craziest Fools **11.00** Family Guy **11.45** American Dad!
BBC Four
7.00 Britain's Natural World **8.00** Baroque! From St Peter's to St Paul's **9.00** Spiral 4: State of Terror **10.45** The Joy of the Single **11.45** Country at the BBC
ITV2
3.35 Film: Toy Story 2 (1999) **5.30 Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) **7.20 Film:** Jurassic Park (1993) **9.50** Take Me Out – The Gossip **10.50** Fake Reaction **11.40 Film:** Gremlins (1984)
ITV3
1.55 A Touch of Frost **4.00 Film:** Carry On Girls (1973) **5.50** Agatha Christie's Marple **7.55** Rosemary & Thyme **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00 Film:** The Pianist (2002)
ITV4
3.10 Film: The Upturned Glass (1947) **5.00 Film:** Invitation to a Gunfighter (1964) **7.00** TT Legends **7.30** GT Academy **8.00** The Sweeney **9.00** River Monsters: Lethal Legends **10.00 Film:** Raging Bull (1980)
E4
3.35 Rules of Engagement **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00** Happy Endings **8.00** How I Met Your Mother **8.30** 2 Broke Girls **9.00 Film:** Beverly Hills Cop II (1987) **11.05** The Big Bang Theory
Film4
2.50 Speed 2: Cruise Control (1997) **5.10** Nacho Libre (2006) **6.55** America's Sweethearts (2001) **9.00** The Runaways (2010) Premiere. Biopic of the 1970s rock band, starring Kristen Stewart and Dakota Fanning. **11.05** Dog Soldiers (2002)

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- Collecting pensions, prescriptions
- Paying bills

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- Mobility around the house
- Getting into and out of bed
- Using simple equipment
- Completing tasks outside of the house - shopping etc.
- Activities throughout the day

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- Discussion and Chats
- Remaining in touch with friends and family
- Pursuing interests and hobbies
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What's On!

SUNDAY'S TV 24.02.13

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE

Yotam Ottolenghi

Ottolenghi's Mediterranean Feast
Channel 4, 7pm

Okay so we don't really need any more culinary programmes hogging the schedules - it's a big enough head-scratcher trying to choose between the crop of TV chefs already on offer. However, you'll probably join us in making an exception for this particular one - even if it is only because he's getting us out and about to various idyllic destinations. First up in his exploration of the Mediterranean's cuisine, Yotam heads to Marrakech, Morocco, where he learns about the city's street food and dines at Jemaa El Fna square.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Countryfile. (R) **11.55** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.00** BBC News. **12.05** Bargain Hunt. **12.30** Call the Midwife. (R) **1.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. **4.00** Escape to the Country. **4.30** Songs of Praise. **5.05** Penguins – Spy in the Huddle. (R)

6.05 Deadly 60 on a Mission. New series. Steve Backshall continues his quest to encounter the world's 60 deadliest animals, heading to South Africa in search of great white sharks, cheetahs and venomous snakes.

6.35 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

7.00 Countryfile. Matt Baker and Julia Bradbury explore Bristol, Tom Heap investigates issues associated with illegally produced meat and Adam Henson finds out how a breed of cow is being preserved. Including Weather for the Week Ahead.

8.00 Call the Midwife. Jenny tries to reconcile a dying man with his only remaining daughter, while Dr Turner and the midwives carry out a mass screening for tuberculosis in Poplar.

9.00 Ripper Street. Jackson is accused of being the Ripper and faces the death penalty, while Reid investigates the suspected kidnapping of Rose. Last in the series.

10.00 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.

10.25 Match of the Day 2.

11.25 The League Cup Show.

12.05 The Apprentice USA. **1.30** Weatherview. **1.35** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 Close. **6.20 Film:** Once Upon a Honeymoon. (1942) **8.15** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. **8.45** A to Z of TV Gardening. **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Live Cycling: World Track Championships. **2.05** EastEnders. (R) **4.00** The Lions' Roar. **4.30** Flog It! (R) **5.15** Restoration Home. (R)

6.15 Food & Drink. Jun Tanaka helps create the perfect burger. (R)

6.45 Ski Sunday. Graham Bell presents highlights of the women's downhill at the World Cup event in Meribel, France, while Ed Leigh reports on Britain's slopestyle hopefuls from Laax in Switzerland.

7.30 Open All Hours. Granville is left in charge of the shop. (R)

8.00 Top Gear. Jeremy Clarkson and Richard Hammond design a vehicle for elderly people, James May gets acquainted with the latest Range Rover and James McAvoy drives the Reasonably Priced Car.

9.00 Wonders of Life. Professor Brian Cox considers what makes Earth a home for life and asks what ingredients were necessary to transform this once barren planet. Last in the series.

10.00 Dancing on the Edge. Stanley is made editor of Music Express. (R)

11.05 Six Nations Rugby Union. Highlights of the third weekend of this year's competition.

11.50 Film: 10 Rillington Place. (1971) Fact-based thriller, starring Richard Attenborough.

1.40 Sign Zone: Holby City. (R) **2.40** Being Eileen. (R) **3.05** Close.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Handy Manny. **6.10** Handy Manny. **6.25** The Hive. (R) **6.35** The Hive. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan. (R) **7.00** Dino Dan. (R) **7.10** Canimals. (R) **7.20** Canimals. (R) **7.25** Bookaboo. **7.40** Matt Hatter Chronicles. (R) **8.05** Rated A for Awesome. **8.15** Rated A for Awesome. **8.30** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **8.45** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **9.00** The Aquabats Super Show. **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **10.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** Dickinson's Real Deal. (R) **12.25** ITV News; Weather. **12.30 Film:** Carry On Henry. (1971) **2.15** Doc Martin. (R) **3.15** Agatha Christie's Marple. (R) **5.15** You've Been Framed! (R) **5.45** Regional Programme; Weather.

6.00 ITV News; Weather.

6.15 Dancing on Ice. The five remaining skaters get to grips with props in their routines as they battle to win places in next week's semi-final. Phillip Schofield and Christine Bleakley present. The results are at 8.30pm.

7.45 All Star Family Fortunes. With Nicola Adams and Michael Vaughan.

8.30 Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off. The two lowest-scoring couples battle it out.

9.00 Mr Selfridge. The Woolworths present Harry with some tough competition.

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather.

10.15 Her Majesty's Prison – Aylesbury. Two-part documentary about life at the young offenders' institution. (R)

11.15 Premiership Rugby Union.

12.15 The Store. **2.15** Monk. (R) **3.00** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The Hoobs. (R) **6.45** The Hoobs. (R) **7.10** Will & Grace. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.10** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.40** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **1.10** The Simpsons. (R) **1.40** The Simpsons. (R) **2.10 Film:** The Wedding Planner. (2001) **4.20** Time Team. **5.20** Deal or No Deal.

6.20 Channel 4 News.

6.50 The Political Slot. The Green Party's Natalie Bennett and Will Duckworth discuss unemployment.

6.55 4thought.tv. A rabbi who believes British Jews should learn from immigrants of other faiths.

7.00 Ottolenghi's Mediterranean Feast. New series. Chef Yotam Ottolenghi travels the southern and eastern Mediterranean to explore its cuisine. He begins his journey in Marrakech, tasting the Moroccan city's street food.

8.00 A Great British Air Disaster. The rise and fall of the De Havilland Comet.

9.00 Film: Unstoppable. (2010) Premiere. Two train operators must stop a runaway locomotive carrying toxic chemicals before it crashes. Thriller, starring Denzel Washington.

10.50 Film: Runaway Jury. (2003) Courtroom thriller, starring John Cusack and Gene Hackman.

1.10 Chris Addison: My Funniest Year. (R) **3.00** 4Funnies: Brian Gittins. (R) **3.30** Eating for Two. (R) **3.35** St Elsewhere. (R) **4.20** Deal or No Deal. (R) **5.15** Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Fifi and the Flowertots. (R) **6.25** Bert and Ernie's Great Adventures. (R) **6.30** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.45** Olive the Ostrich. (R) **6.50** Abby's Flying Fairy School. (R) **7.00** Roobarb and Custard Too. (R) **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.20** Animal Antics. (R) **7.30** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.40** City of Friends. (R) **7.50** Little Princess. (R) **8.05** The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.20** Mio Mao. (R) **8.25** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **8.45** Rupert Bear. (R) **9.00** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.15** Toby's Travelling Circus. **9.30** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **9.45** Jelly Jamm. (R) **10.00** Power Rangers Samurai. (R) **10.35** Batman: The Brave and the Bold. **11.10** Disney Shorts: Bone Bandit. (R) **11.15** Looney Tunes. (R) **11.20** Once Upon a Time. (R) **12.15** Cowboy Builders. (R) **1.20 Film:** Winnie the Pooh: Springtime with Roo. (2004) **2.35 Film:** Stuart Little 2. (2002) **4.05 Film:** To Hell and Back. (1955)

6.10 Beat the Ancestors.

7.05 Film: Mosquito Squadron. (1968) Second World War drama, starring David McCallum.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Person of Interest. Reese infiltrates a smuggling ring.

10.00 Film: Saw: The Final Chapter. Premiere. Horror sequel, starring Costas Mandylor. (2010)

11.50 The Exorcist: The True Story. (R)

12.50 SuperCasino. **4.00** HouseBusters. (R) **4.25** Divine Designs. (R) **4.50** Rough Guide To. (R) **5.05** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.15** The Milkshake! Show. (R) **5.40** Thomas & Friends. (R) **5.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three

7.00 Let's Dance for Comic Relief **8.10 Film:** Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (2010) **10.00** Being Human **11.00** People Like Us

BBC Four

7.00 The Story of British Pathe **8.00** WHAAM! Roy Lichtenstein at the Tate Modern **9.00** Madness in the Desert: Paris to Dakar Rally **10.00** Timeshift: Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting – The Rise of Martial Arts in Britain **11.00** The Swing Thing

ITV2

3.25 Take Me Out **4.55** Take Me Out – The Gossip **5.55 Film:** Babe (1995) **7.45 Film:** Ocean's Eleven (2001) **10.00** The Only Way Is Essex **10.50 Film:** The Grudge (2004)

ITV3

3.40 Film: Forever Young (1992) **5.45** Murder, She Wrote **6.45** Agatha Christie's Poirot **8.55** An Audience with Cliff Richard **10.00 Film:** Elizabeth: The Golden Age (2007)

ITV4

3.35 Film: Morning Departure (1950) **5.45 Film:** Without a Clue (1988) **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union **9.00 Film:** Blues Brothers 2000 (1998) **11.30 Film:** The Big Lebowski (1998)

E4

5.00 Revenge **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00** New Girl **8.00 Film:** Edward Scissorhands (1990) **10.05** Rude Tube **11.05** My Mad Fat Diary

Film4

2.55 Explorers (1985) **5.05** Inkheart (2008) **7.10** My Super Ex-Girlfriend (2006) **9.00** High Crimes (2002) A leading attorney fights to prove her husband's innocence after the military accuse him of killing villagers in El Salvador. Thriller, starring Ashley Judd. **11.15** Blood and Chocolate (2007)

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What's On!

Film Choices

Monday
Striking Distance, Channel 5, 11pm
Cop Tom Hardy refuses to accept the suspect convicted for murdering his father is the real perpetrator of the crime. Meanwhile, his career derails and he is demoted to river patrol. However, his instincts prove accurate as the real criminal resurfaces. Thriller, starring Bruce Willis, Sarah Jessica Parker and Tom Sizemore. (1993)

Tuesday
Then She Found Me, BBC1, 12.15am
A New York teacher faces a mid-life crisis after her husband leaves her and her adoptive mother dies. To confuse matters further, she embarks on a relationship with the father of one of her students at the same time as her birth mother, an eccentric talk-show host, appears seeking reconciliation. Comedy drama, starring Helen Hunt, Bette Midler and Colin Firth. (2007)

Wednesday
The Mothman Prophecies, BBC1, 11.40pm
A bereaved journalist gets inexplicably lost on his way to Virginia, and ends up in a rural backwater where the residents are reporting paranormal encounters and sightings of strange lights. He investigates further and is startled to uncover sightings of a huge moth-like creature. Supernatural thriller, with Richard Gere, Laura Linney, Will Patton and Debra Messing. (2002)

Gladiator, Friday, ITV, 10.35pm

Thursday
Abducted, Channel 5, 3.20pm
A man wrongly imprisoned for murder is placed under the authority of a ruthless warden with political aspirations. Desperate to prove his innocence, the inmate escapes and abducts the official's wife. However, the situation takes an unexpected turn. Thriller, starring Sarah Wynter and Andrew W Walker. (2007)

Friday
Gladiator, ITV, 10.35pm
Roman general Maximus Decimus Meridius is a casualty of a power struggle between the corrupt Emperor Commodus and the senate. Ordered to be put to death along with his family, he escapes his would-be killers and is sold into slavery, only to become a gladiator and seek revenge for the murder of his wife and child. Oscar-winning period epic, with Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix and Derek Jacobi. (2000)

Armageddon, BBC1, 11.20pm
Nasa discovers an asteroid the size of Texas is on a collision course with Earth, so a drilling expert is recruited to train a team of misfits to transport a nuclear device into outer space to destroy it. Sci-fi thriller, with Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck, Liv Tyler, Michael Clarke Duncan, Billy Bob Thornton and Steve Buscemi. (1998)

Pick of the Week

The boys are back with their winning formula

Bruce Forsyth has earned the title 'King of Saturday Night Telly' – after all, he's been hosting top-rated programmes at that time of the week for more than 50 years.

He's been an entertainer guaranteed to raise a smile since before many of us, and even our parents, were born thanks to hits such as The Generation Game, Big Night and, of course, his current smash Strictly Come Dancing.

A few presenters have attempted to steal his crown, including Noel Edmonds, but they've fallen by the wayside.

However, there is one duo out there that you suspect will take it one day – Ant and Dec.

Not only are they extremely good at presenting the same kind of shows as Brucie, they're excellent hosts in their own right with the kind of chemistry and charm money can't buy.

Those are facts ITV's schedulers have clearly realised because they've made Ant and Dec almost omnipresent – it sometimes feels as if barely five minutes goes by before they're back on the box.

And yes, we like them as much as the next TV expert, but we reckon we could live for at least a week without them popping up looking unnaturally chirpy.

However, we don't have to test that theory because, lo and behold, the Geordie duo are back on the box.

Those of us who grew up watching Byker Grove could never have imagined that one day, these two, then better known as PJ and Duncan, would go on to become arguably the most popular double act on British TV.

Ant and Dec were always charismatic and, in their own way, quite cute, but it seems they have that extra-special, oh-so-difficult-to-define something that has allowed them to stand head and shoulders above the crowd – despite their diminutive height.

But not everything they've touched has turned to gold. The second series of Red or Black never broke four million viewers. So what should ultra-successful TV presenters do following a flop?

That's right, go back to an old favourite, a surefire hit. And that, it seems, is what Ant and Dec have done by resurrecting their Saturday Night Takeaway.

The last series was broadcast in 2010, but we're pleased to note that nothing seems to have changed in the intervening years – after all, why change a winning formula?

So, expect to see members of the public trying to win the items featured in the ad break, as well as star performers in action.

Robbie Williams is the first A-lister to appear. He will be providing a musical interlude as well as a surprise for one lucky member of the viewing public. While, Hollywood star Danny DeVito steps into the voiceover booth in the first edition.

Although the star guests are a welcome sight, it's the competitions that make this show so watchable – and although they could be accused of suffering from over-exposure, we're looking forward to seeing them again.

And probably again and again too because, let's face it, if they're ever going to topple Brucie, they're going to be on our screens for some years to come.

Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway, Saturday, ITV, 7pm

Best of the Rest

Monday
Penguins – Spy in the Huddle
BBC1, 9pm
Thanks to this fascinating series, we now know our emperors from our Humboldts, but could you identify individual birds? It seems it's a big ask even for penguin parents as the last episode in the series looks at the challenges faced by the young of the species. The emperor chicks keep together in a huddle and it's up to the adults to check they are feeding the right child. Meanwhile, the Humboldts are left in burrows, which may sound cosy, but they are still at risk from vampire bats. Luckily for viewers, it's not all death and trauma – there's also footage of the emperors learning to skate, and the rockhoppers practising their jumping skills.

Black Mirror
Channel 4, 10pm
Waldo, a blue bear from a children's educational TV show, teaches youngsters about the world through interviews with politicians and establishment figures. However, the animated protagonist is actually an anarchic animated character on a satirical late-night topical comedy show, voiced and controlled by failed comedian Jamie Salter (Daniel Rigby). He unleashes a mix of humorous innuendo, sarcasm and childish vitriol once he has lured someone into the studio. With a Waldo pilot in the offing, the animated character is soon standing against one of his victims, Conservative Liam Monroe (Tobias Menzies). Romance and a viral internet clip are thrown into the mix for Charlie Brooker's cross between 2012 smash Ted, and Robert Redford's 1972 drama The Candidate.

Tuesday
Shameless
Channel 4, 10pm
All good things must come to an end, and this week sees the arrival of the final series of Channel 4's hit comedy drama. The Maguires' empire seems to be doing well. While Mimi (Tina Malone) hijacks the local school via the PTA, Shane (Nicky Evans) is busy getting a new business venture off the ground. However, just as the rogue clan think things are going well, Jamie's (Aaron McCusker) shock discovery leads to him withdrawing from the family firm. Meanwhile, Frank's latest job as a caretaker helps fund his latest leisure activity involving Sherrilee (Sarah Totty) and Derrilee (Sue Vincent), a prostitute double act dubbed the Gastric Bandits.

My New Hand
BBC1, 10.35pm
Thanks to research and human ingenuity, medical science never ceases to amaze. Recently there has been the first bionic eye and face transplants – a case of science fiction becoming science fact. But the latest headline-making procedure is a hand transplant, which happened in Leeds in December. This documentary follows Professor Simon Kay and his team from making the initial decision to carry it out, through to the first time that 51-year-old Mark Cahill sees his new hand.

Wednesday
Child of Our Time
BBC1, 9pm
There were rumours that this fascinating insight into child development might not be returning to our screens – thankfully, they have proved unfounded. So Dr Robert Winston is back for a two-part run. This time the youngsters are 12, so since we last saw them they have started at secondary school and have begun to suffer some of the trials and tribulations involved in teenage life. The concluding part will be broadcast tomorrow, and features an insight into the children's family changes, parental expectations and what perils they may face before we meet them again in a few years' time.

Shameless, Tuesday, Channel 4, 10pm

Thursday
The Schoolboy Assassin: Murder Files
Channel 5, 8pm
For over a decade, Michael Ross was regarded as a hero thanks to his Iraq war service. But, in 2008, he was convicted of murdering Orkney-based waiter Shamsuddin Mahmood during an unprovoked attack in June 1994. Although a suspect almost from the start of the investigation, the only evidence at the police's disposal was circumstantial, and it wasn't until 2006 when a witness finally came forward that Ross was eventually convicted of the crime. This fascinating documentary charts events from the murder to his attempts to appeal in 2012.

Friday
Mary and Martha
BBC1, 8.30pm
Not content with being the man who gave us Blackadder, Four Weddings and a Funeral, and Love Actually, writer and director Richard Curtis also co-founded Comic Relief, and this year he's making a very special contribution in the form of this one-off drama. Granted, on paper Mary and Martha doesn't sound particularly funny, but it is a reminder of why Comic Relief exists and the causes it raises money for. Double-Oscar winner Hilary Swank stars as Mary, an American woman who meets the English Martha (Brenda Blethyn) in a remote corner of Mozambique. Despite their very different backgrounds, the women discover they are bonded by a common tragedy.

Piers Morgan's Life Stories: Lorraine Kelly
ITV, 9pm
Lorraine Kelly has been grilling celebrities and politicians for almost three decades, and has attracted no end of red-blooded admirers in the process, including JLS star Marvin Humes, who labelled her a cougar. In this show, she's responds to assorted personal questions, such as how she feels about being seen as a sex symbol. She also talks about how she was sacked from GMTV, weeks after giving birth to her daughter.

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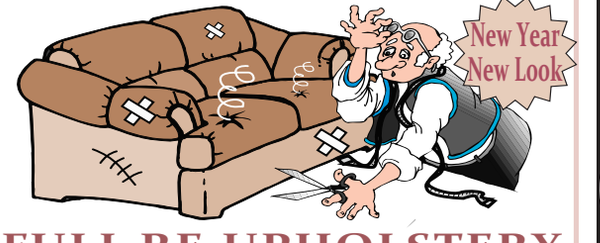

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What's On!

Brain Gym No.209

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

	6		10		25	4	7	10	23	16	4	1
12	1	10	23			24		4		9		9
	9		11	14	20	2	4	7		15	9	1
15	25	11	16					1		3		15
			16		19	2	1	4	7	11	18	2
17	12	1	5	8		13		14		12		1
2		12			21	2	22			7		15
1		7		12		10		9	22	9	1	2
26	4	18	18	9	7	7	2		12			
2		9		19					14	4	15	15
21	4	26		12	1	15	7	2	14		10	
11		2		1		6			2	24	4	16
8 L	12 I	1	26	2	18	12	2		18		20	

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8 L	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12 I	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 K	2 C	3 H	4 E	5 R	6 S	7 L	8 D	9 Y	10 A	11 U	12 I	13 M
14 J	15 W	16 V	17 B	18 Z	19 O	20 P	21 N	22 X	23 F	24 Q	25 T	26 G

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Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Not so many in the cafe we run (5)
4. Fish forced to come to land (7)
8. Doesn't move the corpse (7)
9. Make an admission (3,2)
10. Philosopher reveals hypocrisy, we hear (4)
11. What to do to get the most satisfactory trip on horseback (8)

13 and 19 Down. Screen section put back as a hatch (4-4)

14 and 17 Across. Besides a greater amount in surplus (8)

16. The end of the trip - touch down before autumn (8)
17. See 14 Across.
20. Native of Australia to leave after a row (5)
21. An appointment associated with the French evangelist (7)
22. The distinctive nature of eastern scenes, maybe (7)
23. They are characterised in an adaptation of "The Loser" (5)

Down

1. Sounding to be in favour of information the prophet should have (13)
2. Who brings endless sorrow to a husband? (5)
3. Fence the track (4)
4. A crowd by the Spanish accommodation building (6)
5. Load it in - it's needed for expansion (8)
6. External telephone connection for broad statement (7)
7. Schools that have small charges (13)
12. The result of incomplete waxing! (4-4)
13. Could they be an inclusion in temporary accommodation? (7)
15. Stick to use as an axe (6)
18. Six talk endlessly, being full of life (5)
19. See 13 Across.

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Happen (5)
4. In addition (7)
8. Betrayer (7)
9. Zest (5)
10. Rid (4)
11. Trader (8)
13. Munch (4)
14. Let it stand (4)
16. Maintain (8)
17. Support (4)
20. Sluggish (5)
21. Disclose (7)
22. Beg (7)
23. Finished (5)

Down

1. Rusty (3-2-8)
2. Pursue (5)
3. Scold (4)
4. Trade by exchange (6)
5. Wisdom (8)
6. Far (7)
7. Lacking self-control (5-8)
12. Disparage (8)
13. Vanity (7)
15. Majestic (6)
18. Wandered (5)
19. Pain (4)

1		2		3	■	4		5		6		7
	■		■		■		■		■		■	
8							■	9				
	■		■		■		■		■		■	
10				■	11							
	■	■	■	12	■		■		■		■	
	■	13				■	14				■	
	■		■		■	15	■				■	
16								■	17	18		
	■		■		■			19	■		■	
20					■	21						
	■		■		■		■		■		■	
22							■	23				

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 3 Ship-shape; 8 Upon; 9 Rehearsal; 10 Cereal; 11 Atoll; 14 Unite; 15 Dice; 16 Drill; 18 Ears; 20 Inept; 21 Serve; 24 Settle; 25 Magnolias; 26 Once; 27 Essential. Down: 1 Punctures; 2 Courtiers; 4 Heel; 5 Pleat; 6 Herald; 7 Plan; 9 Rated; 11 A time; 12 Limestone; 13 Feathered; 17 Lives; 19 Seance; 22 Valet; 23 Dais; 24 Saga. QUICK - Across: 3 Transport; 8 Espy; 9 Stretched; 10 Fleece; 11 Cycle; 14 Radio; 15 Edge; 16 Plays; 18 Thud; 20 Tacit; 21 Roost; 24 Fasten; 25 Frightful; 26 Soon; 27 Sternness. Down: 1 Perforate; 2 Splendour; 4 Rite; 5 Needy; 6 Pickle; 7 Reel; 9 Scoop; 11 Chart; 12 Education; 13 Pertinent; 17 Steal; 19 Dodger; 22 Satin; 23 Fret; 24 Fuss.

Sudoku

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

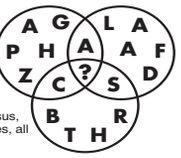
	2				7		3	6
1		7		5	3			
		9					2	
7	5		8				1	9
				1				
9	1		5		2		8	3
	3					4		
			7	8			6	5
4		5	6				9	

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

4	2	6	7	1	8	9	3	5
5	7	1	4	9	3	6	2	8
8	9	3	5	2	6	4	7	1
2	4	8	6	5	9	3	1	7
3	1	5	8	4	7	2	9	6
9	6	7	2	3	1	8	5	4
7	3	9	1	8	4	5	6	2
6	5	4	3	7	2	1	8	9
1	8	2	9	6	5	7	4	3

Circlegram

Replace the question mark with a letter so that the letters within each circle can be arranged to form words on a common theme. What are the three words, and the letter represented by the question mark?



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION: The letter represented by the question mark is I. Dionysus, Poseidon, Achilles, all Greek gods.

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Contemporary kitchens at Electric Avenue, Kingswinford, are well-appointed

Electric Avenue is all set to spark interest

A BLACK Country housing development which is already proving a big turn on for home buyers is set to attract even more interest following the opening of its new show home.

Award-winning residential property developer Selbourne Homes has seen huge interest in its latest scheme, Electric Avenue, which overlooks King George VI Park and lake in Kingswinford.

Even though only four of the 11 contemporary homes on the High Street site have been completed so far, one has already been sold and three others have been reserved.

And with the four-bedroom show home opening its doors, Selbourne Homes' managing director Gavin Warr expects the other properties to be snapped up quickly.

"We always thought Electric Avenue would be popular and we certainly haven't been disappointed," said Mr Warr.

"The site was designed to appeal to a mix of home owners ranging from first-time buyers and families to those looking to downsize. Each property has its own garden and the larger homes come with a spacious single or double garage, giving people added flexibility in terms of their overall living space."

Providing a mix of two-, three- and four-bedroomed homes, Electric Avenue is situated next to the village conservation area, within easy walking distance of Kingswinford town centre.

Prices at the development range from £135,000 to £264,950

With their mellowed brick exteriors and traditional roof tiles, the properties have been designed to blend in with the character of the High Street. Inside, the modern interiors provide comfortable, practical living spaces with streamlined kitchens and sleek bathrooms which come with a choice of contemporary fixtures and fittings.

Prices range from £135,000 for a two-bedroom terrace with parking to £264,950 for a four-bedroom detached home which comes with a detached double garage.

The show home is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 4pm and at other times by appointment. Appointments can be made by calling Selbourne Homes on 01562 888161 or by calling agents, The Lee, Shaw Partnership, on 01384 287622. Brochures at www.selbournehomes.com

Detached house is on the market for £209,950

Bartlams is handling the sale of this detached in Trysull Road

A THREE bedroom detached house in Trysull Road, Merry Hill, Wolverhampton is for sale with no upward chain priced at offers around £209,950.

The individually designed property has two interlinking living rooms plus a superb 19ft garden room, kitchen with integrated appliances, built-in wardrobes in all three bedrooms, bathroom, gas central heating and double glazing.

On the ground floor the lounge, 14ft by 12ft 9in, has a Minster-style stone feature fireplace with living flame gas fire and opening onto a dining room which is 9ft 6in by 8ft 7in and with French window to the garden room.

The kitchen, 10ft 10in by 9ft 10in, has a range of floor-based cupboards with laminated work surfaces, inset stainless steel sink, wall-mounted cupboards, integrated oven with four-plate hob and extractor canopy, built-in refrigerator and automatic dishwasher and plumbing for automatic washing machine.

On the first floor are three bedrooms and a bathroom with white suite comprising corner bath, pedestal wash hand basin and WC.

Outside to the front is a parking area with a side driveway to a garage, while the rear garden is laid mainly to lawn with shrub borders and hedging.

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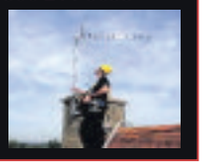

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JANINE petite cute female who loves meals in/out, romantic strolls, WLTM interesting appreciative, independent man for ltr. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400803**

JULIE 30's female looking for some much needed tlc with similar laidback male. Likes nights in/out, socialising, romance etc, call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400487**

62YR old female, widowed, small, slim, attractive, kind, outgoing, likes meals out, dancing, holidays, nights in, seeking professional gent. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 394106**

KATHY 38yrs, knows what she wants out of life, wltm similar genuine male to wine/dine enjoy travel, share ambitions and hopefully fall in love with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400793**

GAIL 52, blonde hair, 5ft 2ins, likes nights out, seeks N/S male, 50-60 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 402041**

MONICA 35, very attractive, gorgeous curvy figure, WLTM nice male who wants to get to know a genuine black beauty to wine, dine, romance hopefully leading to more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401837**

JULIE cute blonde blue eyed flirty female 31, looking for laidback dates and fun times with older confident male, 40-65yrs with GSOH. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401833**

JO attractive 30's brunette who loves life, WLTM up for it male to enjoy nights in/out, weekends away, adult fun times and hopefully more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401591**

TRACY slim blue eyed blonde, likes nights out, travel, commitment phobic, looking for understanding professional male for mutually convenient meets. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401579**

CLARE 38, single mum, curvy hour glass, loves to be tactile, OHAC, WLTM caring male for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399047**

SARA young fun and sick of being single, trendy, well presented, very attractive, loves good food/wine, keeping fit, fast cars, looking to fall in love. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401543**

I'M Carol 39, slim, blonde with legs 11, passionate by nature, loves tlc and looking for similar solvent male for fun times and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 401467**

CHANTELLE 40yr old slim sensual confident female who loves to party, seeking older male for fun dates without complications. Any age/race. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400465**

JACKIE lonely discreet 30's female with many interests, WLTM kind professional male to share nice times with. Status/age/looking unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400451**

LADY widow, 58, slim, brown hair, blue eyes, seeks smart, intelligent, easygoing man with GSOH who enjoys conversations, days out, short breaks, meals out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 387247**

GRACE Jones lookalike, black lady, 53, 5ft 11ins, OHAC, WLTM male, 45-65, 6ft plus for relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397681**

CAROL 37 attractive slim blonde, curves in all the right places, nice personality, good company, looking for caring fun man for fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400263**

CLARE 37 attractive slim with long dark hair and big brown eyes, WLTM genuine male who is honest, sincere and won't waste my time or break my heart. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400199**

TRACY 26, pretty petite brunette, possibly looking for LTR but definitely looking for fun times with outgoing guy. Any age/looks. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397027**

PAULA 37, WLTM male companion for meals out, social drinking, weekends away, hopefully leading to a meaningful friendship with benefits! Any age. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398503**

MICHELLE 39yr old nurse, slim, petite, blonde, blue eyes, looking to enjoy life with similar romantic, caring guy. Single dad welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398349**

HI I'm Sharon an outgoing single mum looking to find love so thought I would give this a go, please don't make me regret it, someone call me pls. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399197**

NATASHA single professional 39yr old brunette looking for fun and friendship with genuine guy, 30-50yrs. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395719**

TRISH tall slim young/good looking GSOH, professional, solvent, OHAC, affectionate and loves tlc, WLTM male who also likes to be in a loving relationship, 39-50yrs. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397579**

CARING lady, 52, brown hair/eyes, seeks male, 30-60 for socialising, meals out, cinema, music, sports and having a laugh. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 392883**

LOVING caring young 68yr old female, 5ft 2ins, slim-medium build, size 12, smoker, seeks slim, well-dressed guy with GSOH for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399923**

ANGELA green eyed dark haired feminine lady who enjoys walking and keeping fit, seeking lonely kind gentleman for good times and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399633**

LISA attractive blue eyed brunette, sporty, well-maintained 25yr old uni student looking for older male for discreet dates. Status unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399619**

DEBS lonely 40's female with no ties, GSOH, N/S, loves the simple things in life looking for similar soul mate to be happy together with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399523**

CAROLINE attractive, kind, caring, 43, seeking kind, caring male for LTR, 45-50. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396837**

CARLA 41, brown hair/eyes, 5ft 2ins, loving, seeking male who likes walks, cinema and romantic meals. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396127**

SHARON slim blonde blue eyed outgoing 30's female looking for uncomplicated meets and adult companionship, like what you hear? Call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 400119**

I'M Heather I love to cook, eat in/out, share a nice flirty glass of large wine or two with good company and am eager to hear from you. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399715**

NICKY lonely 39yr old single mum looking for adult companionship and strictly no strings fun. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 399189**

DEBBIE sexy size 14, fun, outgoing, discreet, looking for fun times only with male over 40yrs, call to find out more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 398759**

HI I'm Marilyn a blue-eyed beauty. Call me if you have a happy outlook and are seeking some fun. Age/looks unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 395665**

SUE confident professional, sporty/active, seeking sensitive interesting guy for intimate evenings in with great food and conversations. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397485**

MARIA French female looking for mutually convenient companionship, very friendly, very discreet and very interested in meeting with you! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 397451**

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Motoring

Compiled by Motoring Editor Sharon Walters

Two new super models from SEAT

TO prove that SEAT really is in touch with what its customers want, the company has introduced the Mii and Ibiza Toca editions. And for the new reg customers can get a great deal.

Toca is the Spanish word for 'touch', giving a fairly obvious clue as to the particular bonus that buyers get when choosing one of these new models.

Yes, it's a touch screen. Specifically, Toca models come with the very useful SEAT Portable System, first introduced to the SEAT range with the Mii city car. The Mii Toca is based on the 1.0 60 PS SE version, and adds the SEAT Portable System and rear parking sensors – both especially useful in the car's natural environment, the busy city streets.

The Mii Toca, like the Ibiza, comes loaded with equipment including air con

At full retail price, the additional outlay for the Mii Toca edition over the SE is a modest £475 – great value when these options individually would require an £805 spend.

In the Ibiza Toca, buyers get a set of 16-inch 'Stratos' alloy wheels (up from 15 inches) along with the SEAT Portable System, for a £425 premium over the SE car on which it's based.

The Toca editions are available to order now, with first cars expected to hit the road during early February – and customers buying either the Mii or Ibiza Toca before April will enjoy huge discounts.

That's because until the end of March 2013 the Mii Toca is reduced by £850, putting the three-door model at an attractive £8,995, while the Ibiza Toca editions all receive a £2,705 cut, leaving the three-door (SC) model with an outstanding £9,995 price.

Air conditioning

Every Toca edition is loaded with equipment, including air conditioning, a leather steering wheel and gear knob, heated and electrically adjustable door mirrors, electric front windows, electronic stability control (ESC), central locking, and front fog lights with cornering function (Ibiza Toca only).

The SEAT Portable System packs a deluge of digital driver aids into a lightweight package not much bigger than a cassette box.

It includes satellite navigation, Bluetooth phone connectivity with audio streaming, a MicroSD card slot for music storage, and trip computer functions, all controlled via a foolproof interface on a five-inch touchscreen.

"The Ibiza Toca is another example of SEAT giving great value to buyers by providing cutting-edge equipment at a very reasonable price," said Simon Bradley, product manager at SEAT UK.

"The SE specification is very popular among current Ibiza owners, which is no surprise given the amount of comfort, safety and convenience equipment it has as standard.

But we really want as many as possible to have access to the remarkable SEAT Portable System. By bringing big car technology to the city car and supermini classes, the device really has moved the game forward," he added.

The new three-door SEAT Ibiza Toca, complete with 16-inch 'Stratos' wheels

The SEAT Portable System is, from this month, available as an optional extra on all Ibiza models, superseding the TomTom unit previously available. The system is capable of having additional functionality added by way of software upgrades, and will shortly be updated to include internet search functionality.

Existing SEAT Portable System owners will be able to access these additional features.

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Motoring

Mercedes-Benz E-Class sees an improved equipment specification for a modest increase in price

Mercedes E-Class range will benefit from more equipment

The new Mercedes E-Class will have much more equipment via a revised model line and only modest price increases, the firm has confirmed.

SE, Avantgarde and Sport are to be replaced with a simpler two-model range consisting of SE and AMG Sport. Both will have more standard equipment than the SE and Sport models they replace.

SE cars will have larger alloy wheels, a new grille bearing the relocated three-pointed star, partial LED headlights, DAB radio, COMAND Online, Active Park Assist with Parktronic, Collision Prevention Assist, twin exhaust pipes and more, totalling more than £4,000 of extras for a cost increase of £2,280.

AMG Sport models feature a price hike of £575 over the equivalent outgoing Sport, but feature almost £3,000 worth of additional equipment, according to Mercedes.

It gets upgraded alloys of the same 18 inches as before, the new grille, revised upholstery, COMAND Online, DAB radio and Collision Prevention Assist.

Three diesels will be available across both models, including the E 220 CDI, 250 CDI and 300 BlueTec Hybrid, while the AMG Sport can also be fitted with an E 350 BlueTec. Two petrol engines, the E 200 and 250 are there as well, albeit the E 200 is for the saloon only.

Prices will start from £32,400 for the manual E 220 CDI SE saloon and from £33,980 for the automatic-only E 200 SE saloon.

The mainstream part of the range tops out at £43,815 for the E 300 BlueTec Hybrid AMG Sport Estate, with the cheapest AMG variant priced at £73,720.

Deliveries are to start in April, one month after the '13' number plate is introduced.

Suzuki Swift SZ-L, with its 1.2-litre Dual-VVT engine, sits between the Sport and SZ3 models

Popular Suzuki Swift range gets luxurious new addition

Suzuki has added a luxurious but affordable new model to the Swift range, to sit between the Sport and the SZ3.

Adding features from the Swift Sport to the existing SZ3 spec, such as a boot spoiler and red stitching on the steering wheel and gear knob, the Swift SZ-L is aimed at buyers who want the looks but don't need the highly tuned 1.6-litre engine from the Sport.

The SZ-L also adds unique 16in alloy wheels, rear privacy glass, cruise control and free metallic paint in a choice of four colours.

It uses only the surprisingly powerful 1.2-litre Dual-VVT petrol engine, which produces 93bhp combined with CO2 emissions of 116g/km.

At present that means free road tax for the first year and then a £30 fee after that. Fuel economy is up to 56.5mpg.

The model is rated in a relatively low insurance group so should be accessible to the young target audience, especially when combined with Suzuki's current 'VAT-free' offer which sees a 20 per cent reduction in the purchase price.

The new model is on sale now, but only qualifies for the 20 per cent discount until the end of March.

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Goals are all around to secure semi spot

Stourbridge Juniors

Stourbridge U11 8
Withymoor Colts West U11 1

ANOTHER all-round team performance saw the under-11s into the semi-finals with eight goals netted by eight different scorers.

James Thompson, with a free-kick; Jordan Edwards; Mitchell Harrison; Jack Tighe; Callum Lawton; Donovan Westwood, with a long-distance thunderbolt, Yash Bharath and Stephen Ross all scored.

Keeper Tyler Beach made what was described as one the best saves seen at this age group from a free-kick.

Stourbridge U12B 3
Kewford East U12 2

Stourbridge, eager for action after playing twice since the beginning of December, held on to beat a good Kewford side.

Kewford conceded less than a goal a game before Sunday but Stourbridge started off on the front foot.

They were three up going into the second half but a couple of knocks prompted four changes in the last 20 minutes as Kewford seized their opportunity and scored twice. Stourbridge, however, held on.

Oldswinford Youth U13 0
Stourbridge U13B 2

Stourbridge improved after a quiet first half to take the victory.

The breakthrough came with a penalty awarded when Nathaniel Connon was brought down in the area.

Brooke Price stepped up and hit the spot-kick straight, hard and low into the net.

A few minutes later, Sam Green battled hard to make the chance for Liam Hands to score.

Stourbridge's man of the match was Callum Collins.

Stourbridge U16B 7
Netherton Colts U16 West 0

A Luke Dimmock hat-trick helped Stourbridge to a big victory over Netherton.

Greg Dimmock. Bradley Edmunds, Jordan Owen and Liam Kendrick were the other scorers.

Man of the match Owen's free-kick into the top corner caught the eye and there was some exciting team play as Stourbridge close in on their divisional title.

Results: Stourbridge U12A 1 Sky Blue Hawkes U12 1, Stourbridge U15B 3 Brierley Hill Bullets U15 East 2, Boldmere Falcons U15 Girls 1 Stourbridge U15 Girls 3.

Lions' Dan Shrimpton and Simon Crouch attempt to halt any progress on the part of Eccleshall. *Picture: Ceri Davies*

Lions enjoy their big win

Stourbridge Lions 34 Eccleshall 0

Stourbridge Lions

THE LIONS, boosted by the knowledge of home advantage against Old Leamingtonians in the Midlands Senior Vase final on March 16, enjoyed a big win over Eccleshall.

The first 10 minutes were in the home half, but two minutes later Stour broke out and forced a line-out 15 metres from the Eccleshall line.

A drive to the line produced a try from skipper Stuart Doolittle in this Midlands Three West (North) game.

Just over five minutes later, the pack repeated the trick with flanker Dan Shrimpton – back from injury for his first game in 12 months – the scorer.

Eccleshall held their own for the 10 minutes, but another romp from the Stour half ended as winger Tom Dews went clear and drew the cover to put George Tildesley in under the posts.

A conversion by Tom Mitchell ended the scoring for a 17-0 half-time lead.

The second half mirrored the first, with three tries and a single conversion. Players and positions were switched, as Danny Cox came on at right wing and Dews moved to centre.

Soon after the restart a backs move ended with Dews putting Doolittle and Sam Strangward away. An interchange of passes eventually leaft Cox to score.

The visitors enjoyed a few breaks which were snuffed out by an excellent home defence but a fortuitous mis-pass in midfield between fly-half Mitchell and Dews brought a somewhat streaky try for Tildesley, who promptly converted for 29-0.

Stour went close a number of times, with Dews dropping the ball over the line after a run and the forwards and backs almost scoring after immense pressure on the Eccleshall defence.

A five-metre line-out gave Stour a chance close in and Strangward was driven over.

The Lions are fourth, but have a game in hand and are two points away from an automatic promotion spot.

Red card mars win as Kings are victors

Kingswinford 4 Droitwich 2

A BRILLIANT start for Kingswinford men's hockey firsts was dampened by a red card and left them facing a tough second-half challenge with only 10 men.

Kings, playing bottom of the league Droitwich, expected to dominate.

At first it looked as if it might be the home side's day when they took the lead after 30 seconds through Colin Morris.

Over the next 10 minutes, Kings extended their lead twice. Adam Pritchard beat two defenders and slammed a shot into the backboard, before Guneet Uppal also scored.

Kings continued to pressure Droitwich and extended their lead before the break through Gary Oates.

Not long into the second half Kings suffered a blow when Bal Lally was red carded for dissent.

Droitwich took advantage of the extra man and continually stretched Kings, but found trouble getting past man of the match Tim Sanders in goal.

Droitwich were able to score two goals close to time but the home side were able to hold the victory.

Saxons pay the penalty with a second defeat

Otley 13 Stourbridge Saxons 12

A 76TH-MINUTE penalty goal from winger Chris Gemmell condemned a misfiring Saxons outfit to their second loss of the season in National Two North.

Stourbridge Saxons

The penalty award was a huge call by referee William Halford, being the only one conceded all game by a Saxons pack that was dominant in the tight phases.

Scrums frequently needed re-setting and Otley shipped four penalties, though only one in kicking range.

Saxons had themselves to blame for the narrow margin, the intensity of the home defensive effort making it rare that they threatened Otley's tryline.

The Saxons opened the scoring with a sixth-minute Caolan Ryan penalty for an Otley tackle transgression.

Ryan slotted another on 24 minutes as Nathan Bressington was high-tackled after taking an inside pass.

Siege

Otley laid siege to the line in the latter stages of the half and a succession of Stourbridge penalty concessions drew a yellow card for hooker Stewart Pearl.

A short-range line-out catch and drive over against Saxons' depleted defences, made it 7-6 at half-time.

Replacement hooker Dale Garner was taken out off the ball as Saxons attacked shortly after captain Ben Hughes read the riot act at the break, allowing Ryan to recover the lead at 9-7.

He missed further kicks in the 48th and 49th minutes, either side of Otley regaining the lead with a penalty for a ruck offence.

The lead changed hands again with a 63rd-minute Ryan penalty for a tackler not rolling away, and, with Gemmell also missing, five minutes later Saxons looked likely to hold on to a two-point margin.

They knocked-on in contact; the scrum engaged, the referee awarded the penalty and Gemmell stepped up to score the final, three points for Otley's win.

Saxons' desperate attempts to run out of their own 22 came to nothing with a knock-on forced by Otley tackling.

They can reflect on a game lost by too often surrendering possession cheaply rather than grinding down Otley's pack.

Otley were able to impose a high-tempo style that kept Saxons on the back foot for long stretches, shipping territory and kickable penalties because of some uncharacteristically poor tackling.

Stourbridge scrum-half Pete White looks to launch an attack from the base of the scrum in the narrow defeat at Otley

Sports sunk by w-eight of scores

Dudley Sports U9 East 1
Withymoor Colts U9 West 8

JOE PUGH got Dudley Sports' consolation goal as they lost out to Withymoor.

Dudley Sports U13 6
Brierley Hill Bullets U13 West 3

Peter Johnson notched a treble for Dudley in this good win. Connor Gordon, Josh Worrall and Dominic O'Reilly also got on the scoresheet.

Old Wulfrunians U14 South 3
Dudley Sports U14 1

Jack Turner's goal was not enough as Sports bowed out at the quarter-final stage of the Stourbridge league Charity Cup.

Warley Borough U14 1
Dudley Sports Dynamos U14 4

Four different scorers hit the mark in this victory for the Dynamos.

They were: Jack Blunt, George Taylor, Connor Haddlington and Chad Derrick.

Kewford Eagles U16 South 0
Dudley Sports U16 0

Kewford and Dudley fought out a goalless draw.

SPORT

Saxons stall
Late penalty seals defeat for leaders
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Lions roar
Flanker scores in first game for year
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Sam now targets a British title bout

STOURBRIDGE'S Sam Eggington has vowed to use his Prizefighter experience as a springboard to a British title shot, ***writes Craig Birch.***

Just over a month after his last ring assignment, Eggington tackles his fifth professional contest at the HMV Institute in Birmingham on Sunday afternoon.

The 19-year-old welterweight has had ring time with the nation's best to get him ready, sparring with English light-welter champion Curtis Woodhouse.

The former Birmingham and England under-21 footballer traded training blows with 'Sam the Man' on two separate occasions recently.

Eggington last boxed competitively as the youngest-ever Prizefighter entrant at Wolverhampton Civic Hall on January 19, losing on points to Dale Evans.

Confidence

But a gutsy display against Evans, who lost to Glenn Foot in the final, left Eggington with more confidence.

He said: "I believe I will get to British title level. Prizefighter has done a lot for me; to box on Sky Sports so soon was great.

"I have got a lot of new fans because of Prizefighter, it's been great, I have even had people from Finland contacting me on Twitter and Facebook!

"When I first spoke to Curtis before we sparred, he came up to me and my Prizefighter bout was probably the best he had seen for a three-round fight.

"It's been good sparring, we have had eight rounds over two sessions."

Eggington will now get back to business in Birmingham against Newark-based Czech Vaclav Skromach.

The durable 33-year-old is trained by former British super-bantamweight champion Esham Pickering.

Mongan misses out on the final

JERRY MONGAN missed a place in the national finals of the ABA Schoolboys competition after being overpowered in the first round of his last-four fight.

The referee intervened after handing a third standing count to Priory Park ABC's Mongan, who was out-muscled by southpaw John Johnstone of Doncaster's Brodsworth ABC at Havercroft Leisure Centre in Ryhill, West Yorkshire.

Joy for Hemel's travelling fans as Moussa Diarra scores

Drew Canavan's curling effort finds the top corner

Ben Billingham's deflected shot is on its way to the net

GLASSBOYS' HOPES HIT BY HIGH-FLYERS

Stourbridge 2 Hemel Hempstead Town 3

THE Glassboys' Evo-stik League Southern Premier Division promotion hopes suffered a setback as fellow high-flyers Hemel Hempstead Town proved too strong.

Indeed two late goals from Gary Hackett's men set up an exciting few minutes of injury time and briefly raised hopes of an unlikely comeback being completed, but that would have been harsh on the Hertfordshire visitors.

Hemel took the lead on 27 minutes. Neat passing saw Danny Talbot combine with Ryan Charles before David Hutton passed to Alex Campana out on the left.

He picked out an unmarked Dave Pearce with a measured low cross who swept a first-time shot past Dean Coleman.

Dean Brennan's side doubled their advantage eight minutes before the break when a Hemel free-kick was cleared, but Danny May swung the ball back in towards the left-hand side of the box where Hemel had men over.

Rallied

Hutton brought the ball down before hitting a shot that Coleman could only parry and Moussa Diarra was on hand to turn the ball in.

The home side rallied briefly at the very beginning of the second half before Hemel resumed control and a mistake from Coleman on 58 minutes led to the visitors stretching their lead further in the 58th minute.

A poor kick from the home keeper went straight to Campana who beat Jamie Oliver before slipping in Charles who confidently rolled his shot past the diving Coleman and into the net.

Stourbridge rang the

Stourbridge FC

changes, but the game looked to be petering out until the hosts pulled a goal out of the blue with 10 minutes left.

Substitutes James Spray and James McPike linked up to find the other substitute Drew Canavan on the left-hand edge of the box and he curled a delightful effort into the top far corner of the net.

A rather tetchy at times, but exciting finish ensued.

In the 83rd minute a wayward Canavan shot was kept in play on the right-hand byline by Ben Billingham and he fed the ball back to Sean Geddes who, off balance, screwed his shot off-target.

But Stourbridge found a second goal with 89 minutes gone.

A purposeful run from Billingham drove him into the right-hand side of the box and his low shot was deflected past Ashley Timms to reduce the arrears to a single goal.

Four nervous minutes of stoppage time followed as Stour tried to rescue the game. That was still time enough for Stourbridge boss Gary Hackett to be sent to the stands for comments made to an assistant.

Hat-trick enough to seal the win for West Hagley

West Hagley FC East have plenty to celebrate after victories in Central Warwicks league and shield matches

West Hagley U11 East 5
Santiago Colts Shamrocks U11 1

AN eight-minute hat-trick from Finley Andrews-Wood gave West Hagley victory over Santiago.

The game was scoreless at the break, but West Hagley broke through after a neat passing move ended with George Sulley side-footing home his first goal for the club.

Santiago levelled within a minute, but Charlie Mycock-Fox restored the lead when rounding a defender and finishing with a left-foot shot.

Then Andrews-Wood scored three fine individual goals, taking on defenders each time before placing his shot byond the keeper.

West Hagley's midfield of Tom Benson, George Edmonds, Toby Mason and captain Charlie Cinnamond impressed in a victory which put their side third in the table.

West Hagley U11 East 2
West Hagley U11 West 1

The East side sprung a surprise with victory over their higher-rated club opposition in a shield clash.

The derby match had a stuttering start with both sides a little nervous.

Near the end of the first half a fine through ball from Andrews-Wood found Benson, who outpaced the defenders and scored.

West Hagley continued to make chances in the second period and Edmonds eventually smashed one home for the second goal.

A West Hagley goal from a free-kick two minutes from time produced an anxious finish, but the underdogs held on.

Anslow double is a lift for Lye

Willenhall Town 1 Lye Town 3

TABLE-TOPPING Lye went away with the points, with Willenhall only getting into the match once they had gone 3-0 down.

The visitors had the best of the first half of the West Midlands Premier clash, Steve Weaver firing at keeper Matt Rogers before heading high over on 18 minutes.

However, three minutes later the Flyers had the lead when Rogers did well to save, after a deflection had nearly fooled him, only for Richard Anslow to net the loose ball.

It should have been 2-0 early in the second half as Tom Rann was robbed of possession, only for Callum Haynes to make a timely tackle as Weaver shaped to shoot.

However, two quick-fire goals killed the game.

Firstly, on 63 minutes a simple ball through the middle saw Kalum Evitts run through the middle to score.

Three minutes later, Lye scored again.

The defence seemed a little slow in getting to Anslow. There was still plenty to do, but he bent a superb effort around Rogers and in off the far post from a tight angle.

The Lockmen finally awoke as Jake Morgan was denied as he burst through the middle before he headed home a 76th-minute corner.

Lye then had a wobble as substitute Ben Mantom saw a fierce strike saved by Price before the keeper then denied fellow sub Ricky Nicholls, his lob not quite having enough elevation to beat the keeper.

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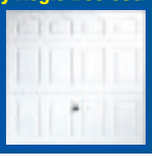

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